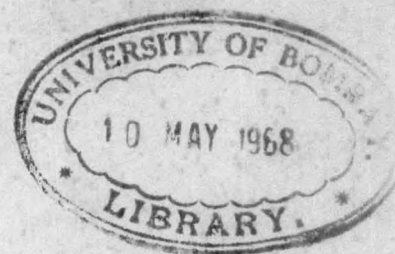


EVOLUTION
of the
ICONOGRAPHY OF VISNU
(Northern India upto the Mediaeval Period)

Submitted to the University of Bombay
for Ph. D. Degree by Miss Kalpana S. Desai

1967



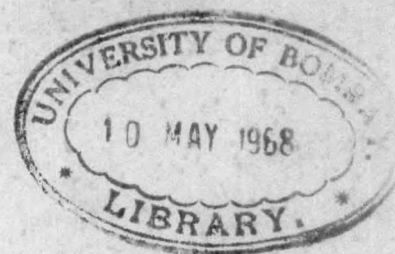
3720

PRINCE OF WALES MUSEUM, BOMBAY.

EVOLUTION
of the
ICONOGRAPHY OF VISNU
(Northern India upto the Mediaeval Period)

Submitted to the University of Bombay
for Ph. D. Degree by Miss Kalpana S. Desai

1967



3720

PRINCE OF WALES MUSEUM, BOMBAY.



PREFACE

The aim of the present thesis is to study systematically the evolution of the iconography of Viṣṇu and his ten incarnations, till the mediaeval period in 'Northern India.' It has been restricted to Northern India because firstly it is the birthplace of Viṣṇuism and secondly, too large a field would make it impossible to study the subject in detail. The subject is specially interesting because together with the evolution in the iconography of the deity it also traces the history of a cult which has considerably influenced the religious life of the whole nation. Several attempts have been made to identify and discuss some interesting images of Viṣṇu, but these attempts are too scattered to provide a clear picture or review of the subject.

Behind the configuration of any form of a deity, there is always some idea or concept, as the images are merely the "visible forms of a God". Hence, an attempt has been made to give in brief the origin and symbolic significance of particular forms as far as possible. The study of the origin of Viṣṇuism shows that several thought processes have contributed to it. The sun worship, so prominent in the Rg-Veda, the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy and the cult of hero worship played the main role in the formation of Viṣṇuism as well as of the different forms of Viṣṇu images. The local cult of the Pañcavīra worship of Vāsudeva Samkarṣaṇa was synthesised with the sun god Viṣṇu of the Vedas in due course - which brought

into existence the image of Viṣṇu. Even in its initial stages the Viṣṇu cult seems to have had a deep impact from the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy. The thought process of the Bhāgavatas was susceptible to it because the Sāṅkhya cosmological theory was very much suited to the cult centering round a god who is considered to be the Highest, and hence, is easily to be identified with the Parama Puruṣa of the Sāṅkhya, the creator of this universe. The only important addition to this view is the stress on Bhakti or devotion, a way to reach the Ultimate.

In order to bring out and protect the whole creation, Viṣṇu, the highest god, is supposed to have expanded himself into several emanations and incarnations. This theory, known as the theory of Vyūha and Vibhāva has been explained in brief, and has already been discussed at length by J.N. Banerjea in his study Development of Hindu Iconography.

The antiquity of the cult goes back approximately to the 3rd century B.C. as attested by the literary, epigraphic and sculptural evidences. The origin of the Bhāgavata religion was contemporary with the growth of Buddhism and Jainism. It developed out of a common urge for a new way of life, which could offer man freedom from the shackles of the orthodox Brahmanic Pantheon.

Wherever possible an attempt has been made to give in brief the symbolic significance of the incarnations also. Some of the early incarnations of Viṣṇu have developed from the worship of natural phenomena. The history of the deification of the human incarnations is not very clear due to lack of

...

available material.

The classification of the images is done according to the standing, sitting, and reclining position, the further classification depending on the number of hands and emblems. The general method is to study the images period-wise comparing them with the descriptions given in different texts on religion and iconography.

Besides a personal study at some of the north Indian Museums and monuments and the photography section of the Department of Archaeology in Delhi, (the photographs referred to as D.G.A. No., in the text) the images published by different scholars have also been utilized for the purpose. The texts on religion and art used sometimes with the secondary sources are mostly north Indian, especially the Vaiṣṇava Samhitās, and Purāṇas.

As the main purpose is to trace the evolution in iconography, it has been purposely avoided to refer to all the existing images and inflate the bulk of the volume. Only sample specimens are described and a few important ones referred to merely to justify the conclusion. All the important and unique images are described and illustrated as far as possible.

The study has shown how simple forms evolved into complex ones, multiplying the emblems when the cult expanded considerably, in the particular period and region. It also indicates how much a cult was susceptible to the influences of the other cults like Śaivism and Buddhism. It traces the history of not only Viṣṇuism but also his incarnations, who formed a cult of their own.

Though great attention has been paid to include all the varieties of Viṣṇu images it must be admitted that the conclusions are alterable in the light of new discoveries.

I take an opportunity here to thank my guide Dr. Moti Chandra for his able guidance in the approach to the subject. My thanks are also due to Rev. Fr. A. Esteller and Dr. U. P. Shah for their invaluable help. I am indebted to the Director and the Trustees of the Prince of Wales Museum for awarding me a Research Scholarship for two years and to the Ratan Tata trusts for giving me a lump sum grant to complete the work.

Prince of Wales Museum,
Bombay.

August, 1967.

Kalpana Desai

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig.

- 1 Standing Viṣṇu, Mathura Museum, 3rd c. A.D.
- 2 Standing Viṣṇu, Allahabad Museum, 5th c. A.D.
- 3 Standing Viṣṇu, Udayagiri Caves, 6th c. A.D.
- 4 Trivikrama Form of Viṣṇu, Devangana, 7-8th c. A.D.
- 5 Trivikrama Form of Viṣṇu from Dhank, Gandhi Smriti Museum, Bhavnagar, 7th c. A.D.
- 6 Śrīdhara Form of Viṣṇu, Mahant Collection, Bodh Gaya, 9th c. A.D.
- 7 Adhokṣaja Form of Viṣṇu, Indian Museum, Calcutta, 9th c. A.D.
- 8 Viṣṇu Holding a Citron Fruit, Indian Museum, Calcutta, 9th c. A.D.
- 9 Viṣṇu Holding a Citron Fruit, Indian Museum, Calcutta, 9th c. A.D.
- 10 Viṣṇu (blowing?) the Conch, Nalanda Museum, 9th c. A.D.
- 11 Viṣṇu with Avalokiteśvara, National Museum, Delhi, 9th c. A.D.
- 12 Viṣṇu Flanked by Garuḍa, Lucknow Museum, 9th c. A.D.
- 13 Seated Viṣṇu, Mathura Museum, 3rd c. A.D.
- 14 Seated Viṣṇu (in Karivarada relief), Deogarh Fort, 6-7th c. A.D.
- 15 Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, Indian Museum, Calcutta, 9th c. A.D.
- 16 Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu, Lucknow Museum, 9-10th c. A.D.
- 17 Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu in a Cakra, Bhuvaneshvara Museum, 10th c. A.D.

Fig.

- 18 Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Allahabad Museum, 10th c. A.D.
- 19 Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, Lucknow Museum, 11th c. A.D.
- 20 Vaikunṭha Caturmūrti, Prince of Wales Museum, 9th c. A.D.
- 21 Back of fig. 20.
- 22 Harihara, Patna Museum, 5th c. A.D.
- 23 Harihara, Mahant Collection, Bodh Gaya, 9th c. A.D.
- 24 Viṣṇu with the Dhyāni Buddha on Top, Asutosh Museum, Calcutta, 9th c. A.D.
- 25 Viṣṇu Under the Serpent Hood, Bangiya Sahitya Parisad Museum, Calcutta, 9-10th c. A.D.
- 26 Matsya-Avatāra, Gwalior Museum, 8-9th c. A.D.
- 27 Kūrma-Avatāra, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, 9th c. A.D.
- 28 Varāha-Avatāra, Mathura Museum, 3rd c. A.D.
- 29 Varāha-Avatāra, holding a Fish, Devangana, 9th c. A.D.
- 30 Varāha-Avatāra, Sacchiā Mātā Temple, Osian, 9th c. A.D.
- 31 Varāha-Avatāra with a Tortoise Under His Foot, Lucknow Museum, 9th c. A.D.
- 32 Varāha-Avatāra, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 10th c. A.D.
- 33a Mahāvarāha, Sagar, 5th c. A.D.
- b Varāha-Avatāra, Sagar, 5th c. A.D.
- 34 Mahāvarāha, Vijapur, 11th c. A.D.
- 35 Nṛsimha-Avatāra, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, 6th c. A.D.
- 36 Nṛsimha-Avatāra, Devangana, 9th c. A.D.
- 37 Nṛsimha-Avatāra, Sirpur, 7th c. A.D.
- 38 Nṛsimha-Avatāra, Lucknow Museum, 9th c. A.D.
- 39 Vāmana-Avatāra, Allahabad Museum, 5th c. A.D.

Fig.

- 40 Vāmana-Avatāra, Sanskrit Vidyāpīṭh, Varanasi,
10th c. A.D.
- 41 Trivikrama-Avatāra, Harihara Temple I, Osian,
9th c. A.D.
- 42 Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with Monkeys, Allahabad Museum,
6th c. A.D.
- 43 Bharata Crossing the River, Indian Museum, Calcutta,
8th c. A.D.
- 44 Kāliya Mardana by Kṛṣṇa, Asodar, 9th c. A.D.
- 45 Kāliya Mardana by Kṛṣṇa, Ceiling of a Temple, Asodar,
9th c. A.D.
- 46 Govardhan-dhārī Kṛṣṇa, Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi
5th c. A.D.
- 47 Pralambāsura-Vadha, Allahabad Museum, 5th c. A.D.

Photographs Fis. Nos. 1,13 by the courtesy of Mathura Museum;
Figs. 2,3,7,8,9,11,16,19,20,21,25,29,38,39 by the courtesy
of the Prince of Wales Museum; Figs. 5,14,34, 41, 44, 45 by
the courtesy of Dr. U.P. Shah and fig. 33 a & b, by the
courtesy of Shri Bansilal Mehta.

THE STATEMENT ABOUT THE ORIGINAL RESEARCH WORK

The Study of "The Evolution of the Iconography of Viṣṇu" has not been dealt with systematically so far, though a few attempts have been made in this direction. This can be said to be the first attempt in this line. It has been brought to light how the complex forms evolved from the simpler ones after the Gupta period. It has also been proved that there was a very simple iconographic form established and accepted upto that period. This particular study has also enabled us to conclude which form was more prevalent in which region. In the later period Viṣṇuism seems to have had a great influence of Buddhism, as well as Śaivism.

An attempt has been made to trace the origins of the Avatāras and show which of them ascended to the position of a cult god in the early and the later period. Influence of Tantrism is also prominent in some of them.

A correlation between the growth of the cult and the elaboration in the representation of that god is also established.

The thesis is mainly based on the study of the texts on religion and iconography and the study of images in different Museums of Northern India as well as the photographs gathered from the office of Director General of Archaeology. T.A.G. Rao has studied it in his pioneer study "Elements of Hindu Iconography", but his book mainly deals with the south Indian texts and examples. The origin of Viṣṇu worship, etc., has

been discussed in detail by J.N. Banerjea, but he does not discuss the evolution of Iconography. Gonda's book - "Aspects of Early Visnuism" has also been helpful to some extent. Besides these, several images published by different scholars have also been utilized.

INDEX

Preface	
List of Illustrations	
Origin of Viṣṇu Worship	1
Viṣṇu Images	18
Śeṣa-Nārāyaṇa	51
Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa	63
Vaikanṭha Caturmūrti	73
Composite Images	101
Matsya and Kūrma	124
Varāha	143
Nṛsimha	168
Vāmana-Trivikrama	193
Paraśurāma	219
Rāma-Dāśarathi	225
Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma	239
Buddha	274
Kalki	275
Hayagrīva	276
Nara-Nārāyaṇa	278
Epilogue	280
Appendix I	282
Bibliography	
Plates	

INTRODUCTION - The origin of Viṣṇu worship

The religion which was widely known as Viṣṇuism in the mediaeval period had a long history of evolution before it attained its final state. Various petty cults and thought processes had contributed to it and their synthesis finally brought into existence a religious system which was destined to play a very important role in the religious life of the whole nation.

A deity named Viṣṇu does figure in the hymns of the R̥g-Veda, but does not occupy a very significant and important position in the mythology of the Vedas. The most important task of Viṣṇu, referred to in the R̥g-Veda, is to take three strides, traversing the earth - the terrestrial spaces - a feat well reflected in his epithets urukrama, vikrama and urugāya, wide-going and wide-traversing. This feature has aptly led the scholars like Macdonell¹, Keith² and others³ to ascribe him solar origin. Viṣṇu also represents a fertility god and a vegetation god as expounded by Gonda⁴. In the Brāhmanas

-
1. Macdonell A.A., Vedic Mythology, Varanasi, 1963. pp. 37-39.
 2. Keith A.B., Indian Mythology. (Mythology of All Races, Vol. VI), New York, 1964. p. 29.
 3. Hopkins E.W., The Religions of India, Boston, 1895. p. 56. He says, "In the person of Visnu the sun is extolled under another name".
 4. Gonda J., Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism, Utrecht, 1954. pp. 1-11.

the position of Viṣṇu gradually ascends to a higher status. He is often identified with the sacrifice round which the Brahmanic literature centres. He is also identified with Āditya or Agni¹, thus retaining his solar character. In spite of his ascending position there is hardly any indication to conclude that a cult may have been already formed round the worship of Viṣṇu. It is true that the whole religion derives its name from the god Viṣṇu, but that is only a later development. Besides his connection with several gods in the Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas, the most important phase in the evolution of this religion is his identification with Vāsudeva in the Mahābhārata - an assimilation with a cult that centred round Bhakti or devotion.

The Vāsudeva worship was differently designated as Bhāgavata, Sāttvata, Ekāntika or Pāñcarātra. The earliest treatise propounding this religion is the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mahābhārata. The section is designated after the principal deity Nārāyaṇa who is glorified throughout the Mahābhārata. He is addressed as 'older than the oldest one', thus assigning him the highest position². He is also considered to be the soul of the

-
1. Śathapatha Brāhmaṇa, 14, 11, 1, 5.
 2. Mahābhārata, (ed. Suthankar V.S.), Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, Poona. VII, 166, 44.

universe, the only one who existed before Creation¹. He is conceived as having his abode in the primaeval waters as the etymological explanation of his name suggests². It must be noted here in passing that this concept of Nārāyaṇa is initially responsible for the evolution of the Viṣṇu Śeṣaśāyī form, where he is represented as the Creator, reclining on the serpent symbolising eternity, amidst the primaeval waters.

This Nārāyaṇa took birth as the progeny of Dharma in a quadruple form - as Nara, Nārāyaṇa, Hari and Kṛṣṇa. Out of these Nara and Nārāyaṇa practised severe austerities at their āśrama at Badarī. Nara and Nārāyaṇa are supposed to have taken their birth for the destruction of evils and redemption of man.³ They are highly glorified in some parts of the Mahābhārata⁴.

It seems that in that period the worship of Nara and Nārāyaṇa, who were at times identified with Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, must have been widely prevalent but was later on overshadowed by the more expanding cult of Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu. Nārāyaṇa is still being worshipped at Badarī, mentioned as their āśrama in the Mahābhārata, which is supposed to be the earliest existing shrine of Viṣṇu.

-
1. Mahābhārata, (ed. Suthankar V.S.), Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, Poona. XII, 336, 54.
 2. Ibid., XII, 328, 35.
 3. Ibid., V, 47ff.
 4. Ibid., XII, 335.



Nārāyaṇa in his original form dwells at Śvetadvīpa where Nārāda approached him. He reveals himself to Nārāda in his multiple forms and propounds the theory of ekānta bhakti¹. He identifies himself with Vāsudeva and says that Vāsudeva is the one who is omnipresent and those who worship him with a single minded devotion or ekānta-bhakti attain him². The same idea is stated in another way that Ekāntins are very dear to Lord Hari, thereby suggesting that this cult of Vāsudeva, with Bhakti as its main precept, was known as the ekanta dharma³. This verse also assures that Bhagavān accepts the pūjā or the worship of a devotee who performs it in accordance with the established vidhi or ritual. It is noteworthy that the cult of Ekāntins had already some vidhi or ritual established for the worship of their god as early as the Mahābhārata (in those literary layers). The fact is also corroborated by the Mora inscription found from Mathura, cited below.

1. Mahābhārata, XII, 336-338.

2. सर्ववासं वासुदेवं दोत्रं विद्धि तत्त्वतः ।
समाहित मनस्काश्च नियताः संयतेन्द्रियाः ।
एकान्तभावोपगता वासुदेवं विशन्ति ते ॥
Ibid., XII, 332, 17-18.

or सर्वभूतकृतावासी वासुदेवेति चोच्यते ।
Ibid., XII, 335, 7.

3. अहोह्येकान्तिनः सर्वान्प्रीणाति भगवान्हरिः ।
विधि प्रयुक्तां पूजां च गृह्णाति भगवान्स्वयम् ॥
Ibid., XII, 336, 1.

This religion was also known as Pāñcarātra and has a clear connection with the Sāṅkhya-yoga system and also the principles of the Āraṇyakas¹. The main precepts of this religion, as propounded here, are the devotion to Bhagavān, following the path of ahimsā, and remaining pure and sāttvika. These principles are very elaborately discussed in the Bhagavad Gītā. This particular religion of Bhakti, which is very difficult to know and to follow, was always accepted by the Sāttvatas². The whole chapter concludes with the statement that this is especially the religion of the Sāttvatas³.

It is clear from the Mahābhārata itself that Vāsudeva, the chief god of the Ekāntins, was a hero of the Vṛṣṇī race. He must have been deified later on and was worshipped together with his brother and sons, forming originally a group of five. Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa is several times glorified as a Vṛṣṇī hero⁴. He is at times addressed as Vṛṣṇī-

-
1. एवमेकं सांख्ययोगं वेदार्ण्यकमेव च ।
परस्परान्येतानि पाञ्चरात्रं च कथ्यते ।
एष स्कान्तिनां धर्मो नारायण परात्मकः ॥
Mahābhārata, XII, 336, 76.
2. Ibid., XII, 336, 41.
3. Ibid., XII, 336, 78.
4. Ibid., V, 20 and 47.

Śārdūla¹, Vṛṣṇī-śreṣṭha² etc. Vṛṣṇivīrau, in dual, is also used for Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma³. In the list of the enumeration of the Vṛṣṇis who attended the marriage of Draupadī, the first four Vṛṣṇis mentioned are - Samkarṣaṇa, Vāsudeva, Raukmiṇeya (Pradyumna), and Sāmba⁴. Aniruddha, the son of Pradyumna, is not mentioned here, but elsewhere he is acknowledged as his son⁵.

Thus at the root of the formation of the cult is the practice of hero worship. Vāsudeva, Samkarṣaṇa, Aniruddha, Pradyumna and Sāmba were heroes of the Vṛṣṇī race, later on deified and incorporated in the theory of vyūha. The vyūha theory has its origin in the cosmological speculations of the Sāṅkhya system, which must have been one of the most prominent philosophical systems of the period. The principal heroes of the cult were identified with the first four creative principles of the Sāṅkhya system - parama, mahat or jīva, manas and ahamkāra. Vāsudeva is the highest nirguṇātmaka, from him emanates Samkarṣaṇa in the form of jīva or individual soul, from him emanates Pradyumna in the form of manas and lastly comes Aniruddha identified as ahamkāra⁶. To put it in the reverse order,

-
1. Mahābhārata, III, 188, 8; IV, 67, 24, etc.
 2. Ibid., V, 69, 8.
 3. Ibid., I, 1, 103.
 4. Ibid., I, 177, 16.
 5. Ibid., VI, 61, 66.
 6. Ibid., XII, 326, 38-39.

when the senses are immolated by the sun, they enter Aniruddha, then transformed into manas they enter Pradyumna, again transformed into jīva they enter Samkarsana and ultimately when they reach the highest state, they merge into Vāsudeva¹. It is noteworthy that Sāmba is left out from the Vyūha theory though formally five Vṛṣṇī heroes were worshipped, as is clear from the Brhat Samhitā², Viṣṇudharmottaram³ as well as Vaikhāna-sāgama⁴. It seems that his importance was reduced later on and was gradually lost into oblivion. From this caturvyūha, which gave rise to the iconographic form of Vaikunṭha Caturmūrti, known in the Mahābhārata itself as the mūrti-catustaya⁵, evolves the world.

The number of Vyūhas varied in the beginning as reflected in a verse in the Mahābhārata. It clearly says that ekavyūha, dvivvyūha, trivvyūha and sometimes caturvyūha are also known.⁶ Ultimately the caturvyūha was accepted and established as a dictum.

1. Mahābhārata, XII, 332, 13-16.

2. Brhatsamhitā, (Tr. Shastri V.S.) Bangalore, 1947. LVIII, 40.

3. Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa (referred to as Viṣṇudharmottaram for convenience) (ed. Shah Priyabala), Baroda, 1958. III, 85, 78.

4. Vaikhānasāgama, (ed. Shastri K.S.) Trivandrum, 1935. Pātala. 59.

5. Mahābhārata, XII, 326, 43.

6. एकव्यूहविभागो वा क्वचिद्विव्यूहसंज्ञितः ।
त्रिव्यूहश्चापि संख्यातः कतुर्व्यूहश्च द्रश्यते ॥

Another concept that contributed to the evolution of the cult was the theory of incarnation or Vibhāva. In fact we may say that even the deification of the Vṛṣṇī heroes, to form the whole cult, reflects this concept. The theory of incarnation is known right from the time of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa¹. There Prajāpati is conceived of as a god assuming different incarnations for the redemption of the world in one or the other way. Prajāpati is supposed to have taken the Fish, the Tortoise and the Boar incarnations. Later on these were attributed to Viṣṇu. In the Bhagavadgītā itself, Lord Kṛṣṇa assures Arjuna that he assumes incarnations whenever there is need for it.

This, in short, are the theories of Vyūha and Vibhāva,² round which the whole pattern of various iconographic forms evolved. With the increasing popularity of incarnations, the Vyūha concept recedes more into the background.

It is clear from this account that the early Bhāgavata religion incorporated the worship of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa or the Pañcavīras. The proposition has been justified by a number of literary and archaeological evidences. The most interesting of all is the Mora well inscription which stands as a solid testimonial for the prevalence of the

1. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, I, 8, 1-6.

2. Banerjea J.N., Development of Hindu Iconography, Calcutta, 1956, pp. 387ff.

worship of the images of the five Vīras, installed in a temple, as early as the 1st century B.C.¹ Though the inscription is much defaced, enough is deciphered to indicate that it records the setting up of the five images of the Holy Pāñcavīras of the Vṛṣṇis, in a stone temple. The word arcādeśa specifically signifies a shrine dedicated to the adoration of these Pāñcavīras. Although the entire temple has been ruined, Vogel² has found two torsos of standing male figures. Both of them are very much alike, carved in the round, wearing a dhōtī with the waist girdle. These are supposed to be the Vṛṣṇīvīras, to whom the shrine was dedicated³. The shrine is supposed to have been built by Toṣṇā, a foreign, possibly a Greek lady, who must have been converted to the Bhāgavata sect.

Another inscription of the time of the king Śoḍāśa, datable to the 1st century B.C., has come to light from a door jamb at Mathura⁴. The inscription clearly refers to the Mahāsthāna or a great temple of Vāsudeva containing

1. ----- भगवतां वृष्णीनां पञ्चवीरानां प्रतिमाः ----- शैलदेव
गृह अवादिशम् शैलं पञ्चज्वलत इव परम वपुषः -----।

Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XXIV, p.194 ff.

2. Vogel J. Ph., La Sculpture de Mathura, Paris, 1930.
Pl. XLIII.
3. Agrawal V.S., Indian Art, Varanasi, 1965. Pl. I,
figs. 166-67.

4. वसुना भगवतो वासुदेवस्य महास्थान ----- शैलं तोरणं वेदिका च
प्रतिस्थापितो प्रीतो भगवान् वासुदेवः स्वामीस्य महादात्रपस्य शौढासस्य
संवर्तयताम् ।

Ep. Ind. XXIV, pp.208 ff.

the Vedikā, torana, etc. This inscription is of 'exceptional importance' in the opinion of Dr. V.S. Agrawal for it mentions king Vasu who according to the Nārāyaṇīya parvan was the supreme patron of the Nārāyaṇī and the Sāttavata dharma¹.

The Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa worship was not only prevalent in Mathura, the birth place of Kṛṣṇa himself, but also in other regions. A village named Ghosundi in the Chitorgarh district, Rajasthan, has preserved the famous Ghosundi stone inscription datable to the 2nd century B.C.² The inscription again records the temple dedicated to Samkar-ṣaṇa and Vāsudeva, which had a Pūjā-śilā prākāra, i.e. a shrine, having a railing round it. The terms 'Nārāyaṇa-vāṭikā' is significant, as it signifies the temple of Nārāyaṇa together with the compound wall. The vāṭikā must have been really a huge shrine, installed for Nārāyaṇa as early as the 2nd century B.C. Another inscription from Nagari³ in the Udaipur district, con-

1. Agrawal, V.S., Indian Art, p. 252.

2. कारितो अयं राजा भागवतेन गाजायनेन पाराशरी पुत्रेण (सर्वतातेन अश्वमेधया) जिनां भगवद्भ्यां संकर्षण वासुदेवाभ्यां (अनहिताभ्यां सर्वेश्वरा) भ्यां पूजा शिला प्राकारो नारायण वाटिका ॥

Ep. Ind., Vol. XVI, p. 25ff.

also see Sircar D.C., Select Inscriptions, Calcutta, 1942. p. 92.

3. Ep. Ind., Vol. XXII, p. 198ff.

tains the same text as the Ghosundi well inscription. The king who constructed the pūjā-sīlā-prākāra for Samkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva in Nārāyaṇa-vāṭikā was Gajāyana Pārāsari-putra Sarvatāta, who is supposed to have ruled in the first century B.C.

The Besnagar Garuḍa pillar inscription at Vidisa records the memorial Garuḍa-dhvaja, set up in honour of Vāsudeva by Heliodorus, son of Dion, who must have ruled in the 2nd century B.C. The fact that he calls himself a Bhāgavata suggests his conversion to the Bhāgavata faith, and it is a good document of the prevalence of the Bhāgavata cult¹. Its discovery has again brought to light the possibility of a number of such other pillars installed in honour of Viṣṇu. The Nanaghat cave inscription of Nāganikā also corroborates the fact that the Samkarṣaṇa-Vāsudeva worship was strongly prevalent in India a couple of centuries before the Christian era². To go still further, in the 3rd century B.C., Aśoka's edicts, especially No. 12, commands the people to pay due respect to the other religions. In the opinion of Dr. Banerjee, the conclusion that the Bhāgavata cult also existed in the time of Aśoka, may not be far-fetched³.

1. Sircar, op. cit. p. 90.

also Vogel, J.Ph., "The Garuḍa Pillar of Besnagar".
ASIAR, 1908-09, p. 126ff; and

Khare, Discovery of a Viṣṇu Temple near Heliodorus Pillar, Besnagar. Lalit Kalā, No.13 (unpublished yet).

2. Sircar, op. cit. p. 186.

3. Banerjee, J.N., Pañcopāsana (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1960. p. 57-58.

It may be noted here in brief that in the early inscriptions, as also in the verse of Mahābhārata cited above, Samkarṣaṇa is mentioned prior to Vāsudeva, and only later on Vāsudeva gains prime importance, even though he is the younger one of the two.

The literary evidences also corroborate the prevalence of the Vāsudeva worship, before the beginning of the Christian era. Curtius informs us that the soldiers of king Puru (Porus) carried the image of Heracles and installed it in front of river Vitasta. This Heracles refers to the image of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa according to some scholars¹. The people around Vitasta were worshippers of Vāsudeva as indicated by Ptolemy². Megasthenes, in his Indica refers to a class of people who specially worshipped god Heracles. Their cities known as Mothora and Klisobora, were watered by the river Jobanes. This clearly indicates the cities of Mathura and Kṛṣṇapura, which may be present Gokula, and the river is the Jumna.

Pāṇinī refers to the Bhakti³ cult and also to Vāsudeva worship in his Aṣṭādhyāyī⁴. In the Buddhist literature also

-
1. Bhandarkar R.G., Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Sects, Strassburg, 1913. p. 26.
also see Banerjee, op. cit. p. 53-54.
 2. McCrindle, Ptolemy, (ed. Majmudar and Sastri). p. 121.
 3. Aṣṭādhyāyī, IV, 3, 95.
 4. Banerjee, op. cit. pp. 53-54.

we find some references to this cult. For instance, the 1st Niddesa of the Suttanipāta mentions the cult of Vāsudeva and Balarāma.

The numismatic evidence also goes to prove the prevalence of Viṣṇu worship in or before the 2nd century B.C. The coins of the Mitra kings always bear the figure of the deity after whom they are named, for instance, the coins of Agnimitra bear the image of Agni on their coins. Similarly, the coins of Viṣṇumitra also bear a seated and possibly four armed figure of a god who may well be identified as Viṣṇu¹.

The human efforts to comprehend that which is incomprehensible and to shape in a form that which is formless resulted in the evolution of idol worship, and, keeping pace with the general trend, the adherents of the Bhāgavata sect began to symbolise their God through various forms and emblems. The five heroes were deified and identified with the Supreme Being Nārāyaṇa or all-pervading Viṣṇu and were ultimately worshipped in human form in stone.

This process must have been contemporary with the Buddhists. The early images of Viṣṇu or Vāsudeva are very similar to the images of Yakṣas of the Buddhist

1. Allan J., A catalogue of the Indian coins in the British Museum, London, 1936. Pl. XXIX, 6.

pantheon. But there is marked difference in the images as far as the iconography of the figure is concerned. The Bhāgavatas preferred to symbolise their concepts of God through certain emblems, which must have been widely known to the people. Besides these emblems there were a number of auspicious symbols, traditionally forming a part of their religious thoughts, which were accepted by all the existing sects - may it be Buddhism, Jainism or Brahmanism. Some of the very prominent symbols were the lotus, the flower garland, the śrīvatsa, the pūrṇaḥaṭa, etc. The Harivamśa Purāṇa lists a hundred and eight such auspicious symbols¹.

The usual emblems, associated with Vāsudeva or Viṣṇu are the conch, the disc, the mace, the lotus, the abhaya or the varada mudrā. The conchshell, being a precious object in itself, is considered to be a nidhi or a treasure, signifying prosperity, in the Mahābhārata². The disc, a symbol of universality and power, is also prominently adopted in Buddhism. So also the lotus, a mark of divine purity. The mace, a very prominent weapon signifying strength was also attributed to him. Of all the instruments, the mace must have been one of the strongest. Its

1. Harivamśa, Poona, 1936. II, 109, 95-103.

2. Mahābhārata, XIV, 1924.

importance is indicated by the fact that a whole section of the Mahābhārata, describing the fight with this weapon, is designated after it. The abhaya - and the varada-mudrās would naturally find their place in the iconography of a beneficent god, like Viṣṇu. The emblems attributed to Samkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha are also instruments or weapons of common use, e.g., the pestle, the bow, the sword, the ploughshare, etc.

In the later texts a very high symbolic significance is attached to these emblems and varied interpretations were given by the authors¹.

Besides the emblems some of the local cults also go to add to the iconography of Viṣṇu. For instance, the Nāga cult which was prevailing in the beginning of the Christian era, has left an undeniable influence on the iconography of Śeṣa Nārāyaṇa or Balarāma. So also the Suparna cult has contributed to the iconography of Viṣṇu by acquiring the position of his mount in the form of Garuḍa². Garuḍa is referred to as the vehicle and emblem on the flagstaff of Viṣṇu³. He is assigned so high a position that all the gods in the Mahābhārata address a prayer to him⁴.

1. Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 85.

2. Agrawal V.S., Indian Art, p. 330-331.

3. Mahābhārata, I, 2, 365.

4. Ibid., I, 20.

As he is considered to be all pervading supreme deity, he is conceived to have been endowed with four hands, the additional pair of hands elevating him to a super-human level.

The Viṣṇudharmottaram gives a detailed description of the images of the four vīras¹. Vāsudeva has one face and four hands, his complexion is like that of a cloud laden with water, and is adorned with ornaments. The earth goddess is to be carved between his feet. The vanamālā and the yajñopavīta are to be carved on the figure. One of his right hands holds the full blown lotus and a left one holds the conch. To his right is standing the mace, personified as a woman, under the right hand of Vāsudeva. She holds a caurī in her hand. To the left of the god should be carved the disc, in a personified form with a big belly, under the left hand of Vāsudeva. Samkarṣaṇa should be carved exactly like

1. एकवक्त्र चतुर्बाहुः सौम्यरूपः सुदर्शनः ।
 सलिलध्मातमेधामः सर्वाभरण भूषितः ॥
 मध्येन त्रिवलिभंग शोभितेन सुचारुणा ।
 स्त्रीरूपधारिणी दाहिणी कार्या तत्पादमध्यगा ॥
 उत्फुल्ल कमलं पाणी कुर्यात् देवस्य दक्षिणे ।
 वामपाणिगतं शंखं शंखाकारं तु कारयेत् ॥
 दक्षिणे तु गदा देवी तनुमध्या सुलोचना ।
 स्त्रीरूपधारिणी मुग्धा सर्वाभरण भूषणा ॥

Vāsudeva, but instead of the mace he holds the pestle and in place of the disc he holds the ploughshare. Pradyumna is also like Vāsudeva, holding the bow in place of the disc and the arrow in place of the mace. Aniruddha holds the hide and the sword. Behind them are placed their respective banners. Their attendants are also described here.

The Brhatsamhitā also gives the description of the vīras, but includes Sāmba in the list and omits Aniruddha. Sāmba¹ holds the mace in his hand, the rest of the symbols being the same as described above.

Excepting the probable identification of the torsos from the Mora inscription, we have not² come across any such representation of the four or five vīras. As Vāsudeva predominated and overshadowed them, even the earliest images mostly represent Vāsudeva. Samkarṣaṇa or Balarāma, who is dealt with in another chapter, is also seen at times. The other two are totally absent.

Vāsudeva, widely known as Viṣṇu, was the most domi-

-
1. Brhatsamhitā, LVIII, 31-40.
 2. Dr. Banerjea's identification of some seated Śūrya images with Sāmba is not convincing. cfr. Banerjea J.N., Images of Sāmba. JISOA. Vol. XII, 1944. p. 129.

nating god, continued to exist and evolve in the later period. A number of images of him have been found right from the time of the Kushanas.

According to the north Indian texts the images of Viṣṇu can be classified into standing, sitting and reclining types, their further classification depending on the number of hands¹.

STANDING IMAGES OF VIṢṆU:

I

In all probability the earlier Viṣṇu images were two handed as the early texts have described him with two hands only. The earliest reference is in the Ādiparvan of the Mahābhārata where Nārāyaṇa is described as holding the disc and the mace only, implying thereby the possession

-
1. It may be noted here that there is a marked difference in the classification of the Viṣṇu images in the north Indian and the south Indian texts. The south Indian texts, referred here only in passing, classify the sthānaka, āsana and śayana of Viṣṇu into yoga, bhoga, vira and abhicāraka, depending exclusively on the qualitative aspect of the god. Further classification into the uttama, madhyama and adhama depends on the accessory figures in the image. It is not necessary to discuss the descriptions given in south Indian texts (cfr. Vaikhānasāgama, Paṭala 61, Aṭṭisambhitā, Adh. 61) because it has already been given in detail by T.A.G. Rao in his Elements of Hindu Iconography, Vol. I, Part I, pp. 71ff.

nating god, continued to exist and evolve in the later period. A number of images of him have been found right from the time of the Kushanas.

According to the north Indian texts the images of Viṣṇu can be classified into standing, sitting and reclining types, their further classification depending on the number of hands¹.

STANDING IMAGES OF VIṢṆU:

I

In all probability the earlier Viṣṇu images were two handed as the early texts have described him with two hands only. The earliest reference is in the Ādiparvan of the Mahābhārata where Nārāyaṇa is described as holding the disc and the mace only, implying thereby the possession

-
1. It may be noted here that there is a marked difference in the classification of the Viṣṇu images in the north Indian and the south Indian texts. The south Indian texts, referred here only in passing, classify the sthānaka, āsana and śayana of Viṣṇu into yoga, bhoga, vira and abhicāraka, depending exclusively on the qualitative aspect of the god. Further classification into the uttama, madhyama and adhama depends on the accessory figures in the image. It is not necessary to discuss the descriptions given in south Indian texts (cfr. Vaikhānasāgama, Paṭala 61, Aṭrisamhitā, Adh. 61) because it has already been given in detail by T.A.G. Rao in his Elements of Hindu Iconography, Vol. I, Part I, pp. 71ff.

of only two hands¹. The Brhatsamhitā also refers to the two-handed variety together with the multiple-handed ones. If the god is two-handed the right hand should be in abhaya-mudrā and the left one should be holding the conch². The Viṣṇudharmottaram³ also describes the type similar to that of the Ādiparvan. The Matsya purāṇa⁴ and the Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra⁵ also suggests that the image of Viṣṇu could be two-handed.

The Viṣṇu worship having sustained throughout the centuries, innumerable images have come to light. It is not possible, nor desirable to discuss all of them and therefore, only some images representing different types are taken into consideration.

The early four-handed images of Viṣṇu date back as early as the Kushana period. Some of them are preserved in the Mathura Museum. All these images, about half a dozen⁶ in number are very similar on iconographic as well

-
1. यः स चक्रगदापाणिः पीतवासासितप्रभः ।
पद्मनाभः सुरारिघ्नः पृथुचार्वाङ्घ्रिचक्रपाणः ॥
Mahābhārata I, 58, 49.
 2. द्विभुजस्यतु शान्तिकरी दक्षिणहस्तोऽपरश्च शंखधरः ।
Brhatsamhitā, (Bangalore, 1947).
IVIII, 35.
 3. Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 60, 2.
 4. Matsya Purāṇa, Anandasram Sanskrit Series, Poona, 1907.
258, 6.
 5. Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra, Gaekwad Oriental Series, Baroda,
1925. 77, 40.
 6. Mathura Museum, Nos. 781; 891; 919; 933; 956; 1729; 2487.

as stylistic grounds. The two upper hands arising from the main arms, below the shoulders, are raised upto the head of the figure and are generally attached to the panel providing the support to the image. The modelling of the figure is roundish, with a short bust and a few ornaments. The tiara and the drapery (consisting of a dhotī and the waist girdle) reminds one of the early Yakṣa images. Sometimes the tiara is replaced by a high crown but simple in its execution. The latter is present in the Gupta period - a little more decorated. The disc held by the god is big and prominent and its spokes give an impression of lotus petals. The mace is very simple and looks like a round top-heavy rod. The two upper hands hold the mace and the disc to the right and to the left respectively, lifting them up above the shoulders. The front or the lower raised right hand is in the abhaya-mudrā, and the lower left hand holding the conch, which looks very much like the amrtaḡhata¹, is akimbo. The vanamālā is generally present.

These are the common iconographic features of the early images of Viṣṇu. It may here be noted in brief

-
1. Agrawal V.S., Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva in the Mathura Art, JUPHS, Vol. XXII, p. 105.

Also refer to

Diskalkar D.B., Sculptures in the Mathura Museum, JUPHS, Vol. V, (Jan. 1932) pl. 3.

that the high foliated mukuta, the folds of the dhoti and a scarf tied round the waist as a girdle, the right hand in the abhaya-mudrā and the left arm akimbo, and the representation of the conch shaped like a nectar flask - all these features have a close affinity with the early Bodhisattva images, and this has led some scholars to suggest that the Viṣṇu image gradually evolved from the Bodhisattva image¹. Apparently, the iconographic form of the Bodhisattva was adopted by the Bhāgavatas to model the image of their own god when the cult of Viṣṇu developed. A specimen of this type of images is illustrated in Fig. 1.

A haloed image from Uchandi in the Allahabad district, now in the Allahabad Museum, also provides a good example of the early Viṣṇu image. The lower right hand is in the varada-mudrā and the lower left holds the conch. The upper right hand is missing, while the upper left is placed on the head of the cakrapuruṣa standing below. A very noteworthy feature is the introduction of āyudha puruṣa in this image. This figure is adorned with vanamālā hanging from the shoulders down to the knees. (Fig. 2)

Another stylistically similar image comes from Jhusi and is also in the Allahabad Museum. The emblems are not represented in their personified forms as in the image

1. Agrawal, V.S., op. cit. pp. 105-107.

Diskalkar D.B., op. cit. pp. 21-23.

from Uchandi, but the upper right hand rests on the mace. The upper left hand is placed on the disc which rests on a small base. Both these images datable to the 4th century A.D., hold the conch in a very peculiar way inserting the fingers inside the conch.

The Sanchi Museum has a similar image belonging to the early Gupta period. The upper two hands of the image are missing. The āyudha puruṣas flank the main image (unpublished).

Similar images have come to light from western India as well. A bust of Viṣṇu from Bhinmal, with the lower right hand in the varada-mudrā, the upper right holding the mace, the upper left holding a broken disc and the lower left holding the conch, clad in the dhotī and scarf tied round the waist, has already been published¹.

Some of the most elegant Viṣṇu images come from the Gupta period. An image of Viṣṇu of artistic quality is in the collection of the Lucknow Museum (No. H 111). It has a benign expression on the face and is delicately ornamented. The image is much mutilated, preserving only the beautiful bust.

1. Shah U.P., Sculptures from Śāmlāji and Rodā, Baroda, 1960. Pl. 10.

Some of the images of Viṣṇu have survived in the Gupta caves at Udayagiri. The image in cave No. 6 represents Viṣṇu with a high coronet, the necklace and vanamālā. The two natural hands are partly mutilated but it seems that the right hand was in the varada-mudrā and the left held the conch. The upper right hand is supported on the end of the mace bearing a fine female figure on its end, evidently representing the Gadā Devī. Likewise the upper left is placed on a big discus, encircling the head of the Cakra Puruṣa¹.

Another image in the same cave is very similar to the one described above showing the same iconography. The only difference is that the mace and the disc are not represented in their personified forms. (Fig. 3).

From Lakhamandala in the Dehra Dun district a few images of Viṣṇu have been found. One of them is a haloed standing figure, rather crude in workmanship but important from the iconographical point of view. The lower right hand holds the lotus, the upper right hand is placed on the disc, the lower left hand holds the conch and the upper left rests on the mace. The

1. Annual Administrative Report of The Archaeological Department, Gwalior State, for the year 1928-29, Pl. III.

order of the emblems held by the hands is slightly different from the other images described above (D.G.A. No. 667/63).

Unfortunately though many of the Gupta pieces are mutilated, some of them excel in their artistic perfection. The ornamentation, mainly consisting of the mukuta, the bracelets, the earrings and the necklace, is very delicate. The figures generally bear a benign expression on their faces. The disc and the mace are almost identical in their representation to those in the early images. The disc is at times too big and looks like a wheel, especially when the god is supporting his hand on it. The conch is represented as an actual conch now, rather than in the form of a nectar flask.

The majority of the Viṣṇu images of the Gupta period have their lower right hand in the abhaya-mudrā, the upper right holds or rests on the disc and the lower left holds the conch.

The prevalence of Viṣṇuism is amply reflected in the epigraphical as well as the literary sources. An inscription refers to a temple of Viṣṇu erected by
 1. Cakrapālita, the son of a viceroy of Skandagupta at Kathiawad in 456 A.D.¹ At Eran in the Sagar district,

1. Corp. Insc. Ind., Vol. III, p. 56ff.

an inscription has been found dated 483 A.D., where Mātrviṣṇu and Dhanyaviṣṇu are said to have erected a flagstaff in honour of Janārdana¹. A copper-plate inscription of 495 A.D. from Khoh, records that the viceroy Jayanātha announced the grant of a village for the restoration of a temple of Bhagavān or Viṣṇu². An iron pillar inscription near the Kuṭb Minar, datable to about the 6th century, identifies that pillar as the flagstaff of Viṣṇu³. The Cakravikrama coins of Vikramāditya also testify to the same fact⁴.

Besides, a temple dedicated to Viṣṇu existed at Sirpur in the Raipur district, C.P., datable to about the 8th century A.D.⁵ At Osian also a temple of Viṣṇu was erected in the 9th century.

The Dohad inscription declares that the chief appointed by Jayasimha at Dadhipadra (modern Dohad), built a temple of Goga Nārāyaṇa⁶.

The Rājatarāṅginī refers to a temple of Viṣṇu built

-
1. Corp. Insc. Ind., Vol. III, p. 88ff.
Also refer to Bajpai K.D., Sagar Through the Ages, Sagar, 1964. p. 12.
 2. Ibid., p. 121ff.
 3. Ibid., p. 139ff.
 4. Altekar A.S., Coinage of the Gupta Empire, Benaras, 1957. p. 145, Pl. XVIII, 14.
 5. Annual Progress Report, Arch. Survey Western Circle, for the year 1903-04. p. 21.
 6. Dhruva H.H., Sanskrit Grants and Inscriptions of Gujarat Kings, The Indian Antiquary, Vol. X. p. 158-60.

by king Pravarasena¹. The same text also mentions that king Candrāpīḍa and Lalitāditya built many temples of Viṣṇu².

II

The later texts on iconography have acknowledged twentyfour varieties of standing Viṣṇu images giving each of them a particular iconographical pattern. In fact the concept of the twentyfour forms of Viṣṇu seems to have been conceived right from the time of the Mahābhārata. While discussing cosmological problems, it is said that according to the Sāṅkhya system, the universe is made up of twentyfour elements. Beyond these elements stands the Supreme Being, Viṣṇu. He creates the universe with the help of these forms which are known as his vyakta rūpas, which can be visualised through images, while He the twentyfifth, who is formless can never be represented in any way³. The twenty-

1. Rājatarāṅginī, III, 350.

2. Ibid., IV, 78; IV, 194.

3.

पञ्चविंशतिमो विष्णुर्निस्तत्त्वस्तत्त्वसंज्ञकः ।

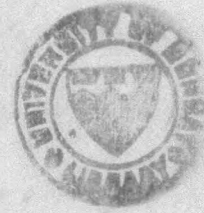
तत्त्वसंश्रयणादेतत्त्वमाहुर्मनीषिणः ॥

यदमूर्त्यमृजद्वयकं तदमूर्त्यवितिष्ठति ।

चतुर्विंशतिमो व्यक्तोऽस्यमूर्तः पञ्चविंशकः ॥

Mahābhārata, XII, 291, 37-38.

also see ibid., XII, 294, 38-43.



four varieties of standing Viṣṇu images thus symbolise his different visible forms.

The only distinguishing point or difference between these images being merely the order of emblems held by the four hands, each variety deserves a separate description. The names of all the twentyfour forms of Viṣṇu are mentioned in the list of the thousand names of Viṣṇu enumerated in the Mahābhārata¹, but their emblems etc. are not described. The order of the emblems of these forms given in the different texts does not tally with one another and hence, the choice of the right order becomes difficult to determine. The earliest description of the twentyfour forms appears in the Agni purāṇa². The Rūpamaṇḍana and the Aparājitaprechhā lists are the same as that of the Agni purāṇa, and hence that list could be considered more reliable than the lists of other texts. Some of the texts, specially the Pāñcarātra Samhitās, enumerate only twelve or sixteen varieties of Viṣṇu images instead of the twentyfour, because they attribute either three or four emanations to each of the principal four vyūhas viz., Vāsudeva, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. While discussing the images of the mediaeval period, we may conveniently follow this type of classification. The

1. Mahābhārata, XIII, 149.

2. Agni Purāṇa, Anandasram Sanskrit Series, Poona, 1957. 48, 1-12.

description of these twentyfour varieties described in different texts is given in Appendix I for the sake of comparison.

The cult of Viṣṇu was prevalent in all over northern India as attested by plenty of evidence. Apart from the stylistic peculiarities, the images datable from the 7th to the 10th century, display hardly iconographic varieties. The most common type is, however, the Trivikrama form.

Innumerable images of Trivikrama have come to light from Northern India. An image of Trivikrama is preserved in the collection of the Baroda Museum (M. No. A.C.2.38), datable to the 7th century. A similar image is in situ in a temple at Gop in Gujarat. (Arch. Survey of India. Western Circle, Neg. No. 258/1953-54). A panel on the wall of the Harshat Mātā temple at Abaneri, represents the Trivikrama image of Viṣṇu. The head of the figure is lost, but has preserved the emblems quite well. It is peculiar that all the four emblems are represented in their personified forms, two on each side. (D.G.A. No. 627/62). Similar images of Trivikrama have also come to light from Bhilsa¹, Devangana (Fig.4), Ujjain², Patan³, Dhank (Fig.5)

-
1. Annual Administrative Report, Archaeological Department, Gwalior State, for the year 1936-37, Pl. IV, a & c.
 2. Ibid., for the year 1934-35, Pl. VII, a & d.
 3. Dave K.B., Gujarātnu Mūrtividhān, Ahmedabad, 1963. Pl. XI.

Baroda¹, etc. The museums of U.P.² and especially Eastern India³ are full of this kind of Viṣṇu image.

Besides several Trivikrama images, an image from Benisagar, Shahbad, is preserved in the collection of the Patna Museum. This image, belonging to the 7th century, has in his main right and left hands the lotus and the conch respectively, whereas the upper right hand rests on the Cakra Puruṣa holding a disc in his hand and the upper left rests on the Gadā Devī standing in the dvibhaṅga posture⁴. The image is that of Śrīdhara according to the Rūpamaṇḍana.

A Pala bronze Viṣṇu, flanked by Śrī and Sarasvatī, to the right and left respectively, is also an interesting image in the collection of the Asutosh Museum, Calcutta. The lower right hand holds the lotus, the upper right holds the disc, the upper left holds the mace and the lower left the conch. It is an image of Śrīdhara. A fabulously ornamented panel, representing the same variety, has been found from Radhanagar, Rajashahi. The

-
1. Majmudar M.R., Studies in the varieties of Viṣṇu Images in Gujarat. Journal of the Gujarat Research Society, 1939. No. 4. Pl. opp. P. 58.
 2. Mathura Museum Exhibit No. D. 21, D 35, etc.
Lucknow Museum Exhibit No. 45.81, 44.48, O.275, O.199, etc.
 3. Patna Museum Exhibit No. 64, 9812, etc.
Indian Museum Exhibit No. 3873, A25193, A25194, A25185, etc.
 4. Gupta P.L., Catalogue of the Patna Museum, Patna, 1965.

Pl. X.

On the Catalogue, the image is described as Puruṣottama.

. . .

lower two hands of the figure are mutilated, the upper right hand holds the disc and the upper left holds the mace. His consorts Śrī and Sarasvatī are standing by his sides in the tribhaṅga posture; the avatāras of Viṣṇu as well as Brahmā and Śiva are also carved.

A fine image of Śrīdhara is preserved in the private collection of the Mahant at Gaya. The upper two hands of the god are supported on the Ṣakra Puruṣa and the Gadā Devī, the other two hold the lotus and the conch. (Fig. 6)

A partly mutilated image of Śrīdhara is in the Udaypur Museum, flanked by the āyudha puruṣas and the donor couple. (D.G.A. Neg. No. 2302/62).

An image datable to the 9th century, in the Patna Museum represents Govinda variety of Viṣṇu. The lower right hand of the figure is in the Varada-mudrā, the upper right holds the mace, the upper left holds the lotus and the lower left holds the conch. He is flanked by his consorts Śrī and Sarasvatī as in many other contemporary pieces. This characteristic seems to have evolved during the Pala period because earlier images of Viṣṇu are never accompanied by his consorts. On the pedestal is seen Garuḍa. There are three other images of the same type in this museum. (M. No. 81, 1666, 1603, 6980).

The Baroda Museum has preserved two bronzes datable to the 10th century, which can be identified as Govinda. (Baroda Museum No. A-C-578 and A-C-5.56). One of them is

flanked by Śrī and Sarasvatī and the other is flanked by the āyudha puruṣas.

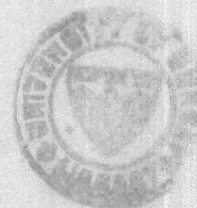
A 9th century image of Acyuta has come to light from Badol. The figure holds the mace in his lower right hand, the upper right hand is in the abhaya-mudrā, the disc is placed in the upper left hand and the conch is in the lower left hand. The conch is held peculiarly in a horizontal way.

The Indian Museum, Calcutta, has a delicately modelled image of Adhokṣaja having his lower right hand in the varada-mudrā, the upper right hand holding the mace, the upper left the conch, the lower left the disc. As usual with the Pala images, he is flanked by Śrī and Sarasvatī. (Fig. 7)

A similar image of Adhokṣaja, datable to the 10th century, is preserved in the collection of the Asutosh Museum. The mace and the disc are represented in their personified forms, to the right and the left of the main image. (D.G.A. No. 1437/62).

An image of Keśava was found in Assam from the adjoining regions of the river Deopani¹. The upper left hand holds the conch and the lower left the mace.

1. Dixit K.N., ASIAR, 1923-24. p. 81-82. Pl. XXXa.



An image of Keśava has come to light from Taka Taloa, Bhandak locality, in Chanda District, central India. The image holds the rosary, the conch, the disc and the mace in his hands, starting from the lower right. (Arch. Survey of India. central circle. Neg. No. 5774).

Some mediaeval images of Dāmodara and Kṛṣṇa have been published by M.R. Majmudar¹. The images of Puruṣottama, Vāsudeva, Adhokṣaja, belonging to a little later date have been reproduced by Dr. Sankalia².

This survey of the caturvimsāti mūrtis makes it clear that in the whole of northern India only selected forms of Viṣṇu have been worshipped by the people.

Numerically, the Trivikrama image tops the list of Viṣṇu images right from the early times. The other prevalent forms are - Puruṣottama, Keśava, Śrīdhara, Govinda, Adhokṣaja and Acyuta.

All these images, described or referred to above, are either installed in shrines and worshipped independently, or occupy the wall panels, but many of them are not found together in temples. An interesting record of these images is still present in a temple at Valam in

-
1. Majmudar M.R., op. cit. Plate opp. p. 58. figs. V & X.
 2. Sankalia H.D., Archaeology of Gujarat, Bombay, 1941. Pl. XXXIV.

Gujarat, where most of the varieties of standing four-handed images of Viṣṇu are not only carved together but are also identified by the inscriptions on their pedestals. Only seventeen of them have survived, from which the iconography of Keśava, Nārāyaṇa, Saṃkarṣaṇa, Govinda, Viṣṇu, Madhusūdana, Kṛṣṇa, Trivikrama, Hṛṣīkeśa, Padmānābha and Dāmodara tally exactly with the description given in the Rūpamaṇḍana, whereas Vāsudeva holds, starting from the lower right, the akṣamālā (with the varada-mudrā), the disc, the conch and the mace, instead of the mace, the conch, the disc and the lotus. The image of Mādhava holds the disc, the lotus, the conch and the mace instead of the mace, the disc, the conch and the lotus. Pradyumana holds the mace, the lotus, the disc and the conch, in place of the disc, the conch, the mace and the lotus. Vāmana holds the mace, the disc, the mace and the lotus. Aniruddha holds the lotus, the mace, the conch and the disc in place of the disc, the mace, the conch and the lotus. The inscription on one of the images holding the lotus, the disc, the mace and the conch is not very clear¹.

Generally the caturvimsāti mūrtis are carved in the samabhaṅga posture, but a few images in the dvibhaṅga

-
1. I am greatly indebted to Dr. R.N. Mehta for giving me this information.

posture have also come to light. A mutilated image of either Hari or Janārdana is articulated in the dvibhaṅga posture¹. A similar image of Govinda has been found from Suhanīa² near Gwalior. It is the tendency of the sculptors of the Khajuraho group of temples to model the images in the rhythmic dvibhaṅga or the tribhaṅga posture, and hence some of the Viṣṇu images are also in these postures, for instance the images of Puruṣottama and Padmanābha in the Lakṣmana and Jagadambī temples³.

To sum up, stylistically the early images of Viṣṇu invariably have the lower right hand represented in a very peculiar way. The palm is stretched out as in the varadamudrā and only the last pores of the fingers are bent to support a roundish object, presumably the lotus. The Kushana and early Gupta images are stout and short and all the four hands are held up above the shoulders. In the Gupta period the position of the hands undergoes certain changes. The main two hands are lowered down to the waist, and with the introduction of the āyudha puruṣas the upper two hands also come down to rest on the head of the āyudha puruṣas, so much so that they look like the lowermost

-
1. Annual Administrative Report of the Arch. Dept., Gwalior State, for the year 1934-35. Pl. VII, c.
 2. Ibid., for the year 1927-28. Pl. VI, d.
 3. Agrawal Urmila, Khajuraho Sculptures and their Significance, Delhi, 1964. Figs. 6, 7, 8.

pair of hands. It must be noted in such cases that even though these hands look like the lowermost, they are not considered to be so because, the main pair of hands is always considered to be the lower in the four-handed images of Viṣṇu. (The words dakṣiṇādhah and mukhya dakṣiṇa are synonyms.)

The images of the mediaeval period tend to be more ornamental than those of the Gupta period. The representation of the emblems is very stylised and a definite attempt can be seen to make them very decorative and beautiful. The presence of the āyudha puruṣas becomes very frequent. The āyudha-puruṣas are represented in a pot-bellied dwarfish form holding the emblems in their hands, standing in a dvibhaṅga posture¹.

According to the description given in the different texts cited in the table, the four armed images are supposed to hold the four usual emblems of Viṣṇu viz. the conch, the lotus, the mace and the disc, but, as is clear from the images studied above, the sculptors very often take the liberty to represent the lower right hand of the god in the varada or the abhaya-mudrā, very much appropriate to the benign god Viṣṇu.

1. Pramod Chandra, Master Bronzes of India, Chicago, 1965. Pl. 13. This image of Ṣakra puruṣa from Kashmir is a fine example of the āyudha puruṣa of the Gupta period.

The images of Viṣṇu discussed above are some of the very common types of the standing four-handed varieties. It will be interesting to examine some peculiar and uncommon types either found or described in the texts. According to the description given in the Harivamśa, Viṣṇu is supposed to be holding the bow, the disc, the mace with the bell (ghantā), and the sword¹. The Brhat brahma Samhitā also prescribed the sword, the plough, the conch and the disc². The same text describes Śrīdhara as holding the shield (carma), the bow, the sword, and the lotus³. The Sāttvata Samhitā prescribes the Kamandalu in the hands of Nārāyaṇa⁴, whereas Viṣṇu holds the plough

1. विष्णु संग्रामसंभूतं प्रगृह्य विपुलं धनुः ।
प्रतिष्ठत महाबाहुः पाणिना चक्रमादधत् ॥
गदां सघटां बन्धेन सङ्गमन्धेन पाणिना ।
प्रगृह्य सोऽग्रतो तिष्ठद्बुद्धायोधत पाणये ॥

Harivamśa, III, 32, 36-37.

2. विष्णुं च दक्षिणे कुक्षौ गौरवर्णं मनोहरम् ।
चक्रं शंखं हस्तं सङ्गं बिभ्राणं दामवाससम् ॥

Brhat brahma Samhitā, (Anandasram Sanskrit series). 13, 65.

3. Ibid., XIII, 69.
4. Sāttvata Samhitā, (ed. P.R.A. Charlar) Kandu, 1902.
XII, 42-43.

(sira), the disc, the pestle and the mace¹.

None of these iconographic forms seem to have been accepted by the sculptors for, so far, no Viṣṇu image holding the bell or the sword, etc. has come to light.

A couple of images from Bihar, now preserved in the collection of the Indian Museum, hold the citron fruit in the lower right hand instead of the lotus. Iconographically and stylistically both are very similar, belonging to the 11th century (figs. 8, 9, Museum No. 3973). The image of Viṣṇu holding the citron fruit is not referred to by the texts on iconography, but Viṣṇu in his Viśvarūpa form holds the fruit.²

The Viṣṇudharmottam^{ra}³ describes the image of

1. सिन्दूरशिसराकारं एकवक्त्रं चतुर्भुजम् ॥
अतसीपुष्पसंकाशं -----
मुख्येन पाणियुग्मेन तुल्यमाद्यस्य वै विप्रोः ॥
सीरं कञ्च च हस्तेऽस्य मुसलं तु गदा करे ।



Sāttvata Samhitā, V, 12-14.

2. Aparājitaprocchā, (ed. Mankad P.A.) Baroda, 1950.
219, 29.

3. एकवक्त्रं चतुर्बाहुः सौम्यरूपः सुदर्शनः ।
सलिलाध्मातमेधामः सर्वाभरणभूषितः ॥

मध्येन त्रिवलिमङ्गशोभितेन सुचारुणा ।
स्त्रीरूपधारिणी दाोणी कार्या तत्पादमध्यगा ॥

Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 85, 2-6. • •

Viṣṇu, holding his usual emblems and between his feet should be carved a small figure of the goddess Bhūmi. Its sculptural representation, published by Coomaraswamy, is a 9th century image from Kashmir, having a small figure of the goddess between his feet¹. A very similar image from Kashmir is in the private collection of Shri Haridas Swali. This feature seems to have been current in Kashmir more than anywhere else.

A reference may here be made to an interesting image from Nalanda, datable to about the 9th century. The upper two hands of the god hold the mace and the disc, while the front two hands hold the conch near the chest, as if preparing to blow it. It is difficult to understand what the sculptor tries to represent by this (Fig.10).

Sometimes the devotees of Hindu gods accept the Buddhist pattern of iconography. An image of Keśava from Gujarat, bears an image of Viṣṇu on his crown, like the figure of the dhyānī Buddha on the crown of a Bodhisattva. It represents something like the emanation of the different forms from the Mahā Viṣṇu or Viṣṇu as the Parama Puruṣa².

-
1. Coomaraswamy A.K., History of Indian & Indonesian Art, London, 1927. Pl. XCI, Fig. 272.
 2. Majmudar M.R., op. cit., p. 50, Pl. VI.

There is an image of Viṣṇu of the Pala period in the collection of the National Museum, showing very clearly the impact of Buddhism. The richly ornamented figure of the four-handed Viṣṇu in his Trivikrama form, bears an image of Avalokiteśvara on the pedestal. It clearly indicates that the sculptor has tried to assimilate the Buddhist god into the Vaiṣṇava pantheon, though subordinated to Viṣṇu himself. (Fig. 11)

Lastly, one iconographic peculiarity in the image of the four-handed Viṣṇu may be mentioned. An image in the Lucknow Museum, holding the emblems of the Trivikrama order, is flanked on the right side by Lakṣmī and on the left side by a small haloed figure holding a snake in his hand, (Fig. 12). This figure may be identified as a personified representation of the serpent Śeṣa who is always connected with Viṣṇu at the time of creation, as also is Lakṣmī, or it can also be Garuḍa in his personified form. A similar figure of the personified Śeṣa or Garuḍa is also found in an image of Viṣṇu, referred to above, now preserved in the Watson Museum, Rajkot. (unpublished).

The six-handed variety of Viṣṇu images is also described in the texts on iconography and religion. The Sāttvata Samhitā prescribes the sword (nistrimśa), the lotus and the mace in the right hands and the bow, the

arrow and the conch in his left hands¹.

The image of Viṣṇu with eight hands holding the different emblems has been described by various texts. The Brhatsamhitā² describes this kind of image as follows:-

"The image of Viṣṇu can either be eight, four or two-handed. His chest bears the śrīvatsa mark and it should be adorned with the kaustubha gem. He should be made as dark as the sesme flower. He is clothed in a yellow garment and has a benign expression on his face. He wears a diadem, earrings and has roundish neck, breast, shoulders and arms. Of the eight arms the right four carry

1. षड्भुजो दक्षिणैर्धौ निस्त्रिंशं कमलं गदाम् ।
सशरं कार्मुकं शरं वामैस्त्रोत्तमं त्रिभिः ॥

Sāttvata Samhitā, XII, 222.

2.

श्रीवत्सांकितवक्त्राः कौस्तुभमणिभूषितोरस्कः ॥
अक्षीकुसुमश्यामः पीताम्बरनिकसनः प्रसन्नमुखः ।
कुण्डल किरीटधारी पीनगलोरः स्थलासंभुजः ॥
सङ्ग गदाशरपाणिर्दक्षिणतः शान्तिदश्चतुर्थकरः ।
वामकरोष्ण कार्मुकं शेटकं चक्राणिशंसश्च ॥

Brhatsamhitā, IVII, 31-33.

the dagger, the mace, the arrow and one hand is in the abhaya mudrā; and the left four carry the bow, the disc and the conch.¹

The Matsyapurāṇa also gives an almost similar description of the eight-handed variety. The right hands should hold the dagger, the mace, the arrow and the lotus, and the left hands hold the bow, the shield, the conch and the disc¹.

The order of emblems according to the Devatāmūrti-prakarana is slightly different. It prescribes the dagger, the mace, the arrow and the lotus for the right hands and the conch, the bow, the disc and the shield for the left hands².

The Sāttvata Samhitā attributes some different emblems to Viṣṇu. He is supposed to hold in the right hands the mace, the pestle, the disc, the sword, and in his left hands the conch, the trident, the noose and the bow together with the arrow³.

1.

सङ्ख्यो गदा शरः पद्मं दिव्यं दक्षिणतो हरेः ।

धनुश्च सट्कं चैव शंसक्रे च वामतः ॥

Matsya Purāṇa, 258, 7.

2. Devatāmūrtiprakarana, (ed. Sankhyatirtha V.M.),
Calcutta, 1936. V, 69.

3.

गदामुसलचक्रासीनष्टबाहुस्तु दक्षिणैः ।

शंसमद्वयपाशौ च वामेस्तु सशरं धनुः ॥

Sāttvata Samhitā, XII, 223.

Two eight-handed images of Viṣṇu have been preserved in the Mathura Museum, belonging to the early Gupta period. The lower portion of one of them (M. No. 1010), has been lost, also the left arms. Two of the right hands holds the sword and the arrow and the other arm, which is stretched across the chest, seems to hold the lance. The other image is also mutilated and hence not all the emblems are clear. The right hands hold the dagger, the arrow, the lance or the noose and an unidentifiable object. The only extant left hand holds the conch¹.

Viṣṇu images with more than eight hands have also been referred to. The Sāttvata Samhitā describes the ten-handed Viṣṇu, holding in his right hands the dagger, the arrow, the mace, the lotus, the lance, whereas in his left hands he holds the bow, the conch, the disc, the sword and the lower left hand is in the abhaya-mudrā¹.

The same text also describes a Viṣṇu with twelve hands. The six right hands hold the lotus, the dagger, the disc, the arrow and the mace and the trident. The

-
1. Bajpai K.D., Two Rare Images of Viṣṇu from Mathura. JUPHS, Vol. II, Part i-ii, 1954. P.17 pl.
 - 2.

सहस्रबाणगदापद्मशक्तियुक्तास्तु दक्षिणाः ।
दशबाहोः धनुः शंखचक्रहस्ताश्च सामयाः ॥

Sāttvata Samhitā, XII, 224.

left hands have the conch, the noose, the third one is in the abhaya-mudrā, the rest holds the lance, the pestle and the bow¹.

The fourteen-handed variety should hold, according to the same text, the conch, the mace, the trident, the noose, the pestle, the hammer and the plough in his left hands, and the staff, the lotus, the thunderbold, the disc, the dagger, the axe and the lance in his right hands². This multihanded variety of the Viṣṇu image has not come to light so far upto the mediaeval period.

The early iconography of Viṣṇu is very simple representing him only in one iconographical form which must have been the only established form of the Viṣṇu image till the Gupta period. Later on in the mediaeval period it becomes more complicated because an attempt was made to represent the various aspects of Viṣṇu, merely

1. षण्णां दक्षिणहस्तानां द्विषट्कमुजभूषितः ।
सन्धते कमलं सङ्गच्छबाणगदाङ्कुशान् ॥
शंसपाशामयान् शक्तिं सव्यानां मुसलं धनुः ।

Sāttvata Samhitā, XII, 225.

2. चतुर्दशभुजोद्यते वामे तु भुज सप्तके ।
शंसं गदाङ्कुशौ पाशं मुसलं मुद्गरं हलम् ॥
दण्डाब्जकुलशान् चक्रं सङ्गशक्तिपरश्वधान् ॥

Ibid., XII, 227.

through the order of emblems. Not satisfied even with this the sculptors and the devotees try to represent his superhuman qualities through the multiple hands and emblems, as reflected in several texts on iconography and religion. When this form with multiple hands and emblems was blended with the Caturmūrti, it gave rise to the image of Mahāviṣṇu.

SEATED IMAGES

The images of Viṣṇu, seated on his vāhana Garuḍa were also worshipped by the people, though not as commonly as the standing ones. Viṣṇu on his vāhana Garuḍa has already been referred to in the Mahābhārata¹.

The Harivamśa describes image of Viṣṇu seated on his mount Garuḍa. Three of his four hands should hold the conch, the disc, and the mace but nothing is said about the emblem to be held by the fourth hand.²

1.

तं वज्रे वाहनं कृष्णो गरुत्मन्तं महाबलम् ।
ध्वजं चक्रे भगवानुपरि स्थास्यसीति तम् ॥

Mahābhārata, I, 29, 16.

2.

शैलचक्रगदापाणिं गरुडस्योपरि स्थितम् ।

Harivamśa, II, 99, 11.

Though Viṣṇu is conceived as seated on his mount the early images show him to be seated on pedestal, exactly in the manner of the early Kubera figures. One of the seated images of Viṣṇu, datable to the Kushana period is in the collection of the Mathura Museum. The image seems to have been four-handed but the upper right hand is lost. The lower right hand is raised to the shoulder, in the abhaya-mudrā, the palm being joined to the back slab. The upper left hand holds the disc while the emblem of the lower left hand is lost. On either side of Viṣṇu are two squatting figures, with one of their hands resting on the ground, identified by Diskalkar as the consorts of Viṣṇu. It is apparent from the disc around the head of one of them that the figures represent the āyudha-puruṣas, hence the figure on the left is the cakrapuruṣa and on the right is the Gadā Devī¹. A similar figure in red sandstone is preserved in the same museum². (fig. 13)

A haloed image of Viṣṇu seated in the lalitāsana is from Mathura belonging to the same period. The lower right hand which is raised to the shoulder is in the abhaya-mudrā. The upper right hand is resting on the mace, the other end of which is supported on the ground. The

1. Diskalkar D.B., op. cit. p. 24, Pl. III.

2. Ibid., p. 24-25. (M. No. 512)

lower left hand rests on the big disc which is also placed on the ground. The upper left hand holds the conch. Below the folded right leg of the god near the mace is a small female figure that can be identified as Gadā Devī¹.

A long time elapses before we get another seated Viṣṇu, image. Surprisingly, the only specimen of the Gupta period is a figure forming a part of the Karivarada relief, at Deogarh. It represents Viṣṇu on his mount Garuḍa, when he came to the rescue of the elephant. But for his feathers, Garuḍa is completely in a human form. Viṣṇu is seated on his shoulders holding the mace in his lower right hand and supporting his lower left hand on his knees. The two upper hands are mutilated². An exactly similar image has come to light from Deogarh fort belonging to the later period (fig. 14).

The Gandhāresvara temple at Sirpur has a beautiful image of the four-handed Viṣṇu seated on Garuḍa, who has a human body with curly hair and leaflike feathers. He is supporting the legs of Viṣṇu with his hands. A serpent is wound round the neck like a necklace. Viṣṇu holds the lotus in his right lower hand, the conch in

1. Diskalkar D.B., op. cit., pl. IV.

2. Vats M.S., Gupta Temple at Deogarh. MAI, No. 70, Pl. Xa.

his upper right hand, the upper left hand is broken and the lower left is supported on the knee. This haloed figure adorned with various ornaments excepting the vanamālā is a specimen of the eighth century art of central India¹.

Some stray images of the seated Viṣṇu have come to light from western India belonging to the mediaeval period. A panel in the Ajmer Museum (M. No. 286. D.G.A. Neg. No. 1430/64) represents Viṣṇu seated on his mount Garuḍa. Unfortunately, the image is very mutilated, only the mace and the disc surviving in the upper two hands.

A fine specimen of the 9th century has been preserved on the outer wall of the Harihara temple I at Osian, near Jodhpur. Viṣṇu is seated on the shoulders of Garuḍa who is depicted completely in human form. The lower right hand of the god is in the varada-mudrā, the upper right holds the mace, the upper left holds the disc and the emblem of the lower left hand is not clear.

An interesting image in the Kotah Museum, datable to the 8th century, represents Viṣṇu seated on pedestal instead of Garuḍa, in the lalitāsana posture. His right leg is slightly folded and the left one is hanging down.

1. Dikṣit^{sh} M.G., Sirpur and Rajim Temples, Bombay, 1960.

He holds in his lower right hand the lotus which is partly mutilated, the upper right hand holds the disc, the upper left the mace and the lower left the conch. Iconographically it can be classified as an image of Śrīdhara.

An image from Patan, seated in the padmāsana posture has been preserved in the Baroda Museum. It occupies a part of the image frame datable to the 8th century. The lower right hand of the god is in the varada-mudrā, the upper right is in the abhaya-mudrā, the upper left holds the lotus and the lower left holds the conch.

Images of the Trivikrama form, seated on the Garuḍa, are found on the walls of the Kandāria Mahādev and the Viśvanātha temple at Khajuraho¹.

The eastern Indian images of Viṣṇu on Garuḍa show a stylistic variation. The figure of Garuḍa is not represented in human form as in the images described above. An image in the Indian Museum shows Viṣṇu seated on the back of a big Garuḍa with his feathers spread out to support Viṣṇu as well as the āyudha-puruṣas, who are shown to be seated on the feathers only. Iconographically

1. Agrawal Urmila, op. cit. p. 31. Pl. V.

the image of Viṣṇu can be classed as Trivikrama (fig. 15). An exactly similar image is in the Cleveland Museum¹.

An image in the Asutosh Museum represents Garuḍa with beautifully serrated feathers carved behind him. Garuḍa supports the feet of Viṣṇu with both of his hands. The emblems in the hands of Viṣṇu are the lotus, the mace, the disc, and the conch as usual.

The multi-handed images of Viṣṇu on Garuḍa are also referred to. The Hariṇamśa describes a six-handed variety mounted on Garuḍa, holding the conch, the disc, the mace, the dagger, the bow and the arrow, and wearing an armour. A temple of Limboji Mātā at Delmal has preserved a six-handed Viṣṇu on Garuḍa but unfortunately it is mutilated and hence the emblems in the hands are not clear. Two of the three right hands have survived. One is in the varada-mudrā, one holds the mace. One of the left hands holds the disc and the rest are mutilated².

The eight-handed variety of seated Viṣṇu is referred to in the Īśānaśiva. The god, seated on Garuḍa, should

1. Agrawal R.C., Unpublished Garuḍārūḍha Viṣṇu from Eastern India, Lalit Kalā, No. 12, Oct. 1962. Pl. XXIX, fig. 3.
2. I am indebted to Dr. R.N. Mehta for this information.

hold the conch, the disc, the noose, the trident, the bow, the arrow, the mace and the sword¹.

The Sāttvata Samhitā describes a seated Viṣṇu with twelve hands, holding in his right hands the disc, the lotus, the mace, the arrow, the trident and the spear while in his left hands he holds the lance, the noose, the bow, the pestle, the hammer, and the shield².

Generally, these multi-handed seated Viṣṇu images are blended with the Vaikunṭha image and hence are endowed with the additional heads of the lion and the boar. Such images known as Trailokyamohana and Ananta variety, are seen only late in the mediaeval period.

To sum up, there is hardly any evolution in the representation of the seated images of Viṣṇu. The same type persists throughout the period. The only notable variety is from eastern India as noted above, where Garuḍa is always represented in his zoomorphic form instead of being personified.

The reclining or sleeping images of Viṣṇu are always associated with Śeṣa and hence are dealt with in another chapter.

-
1. Īśānaśiva, Trivandrum, 1920. Pūrvārdha, Paṭala 35
śl. 115.
 2. Sāttvata Samhitā, XII, 95-97.

ŚEṢA-NĀRĀYANA¹

The association of Viṣṇu with the serpent Śeṣa has its roots in the concept of Nārāyaṇa as the Lord of the waters, referred to in the Mahābhārata. As already mentioned in the introduction, Nārāyaṇa has his abode on the Prīmaeval waters. When Viṣṇu was identified with Nārāyaṇa he was also conceived to have been reclining on the primordial waters on the serpent-bed and creating a lotus from his navel out of his own will, from which Brahmā was born². The Jayākhya Samhitā mentions that before the creation of this universe, Bhagavān created Brahmā from his own navel, out of his own will³. In the Śānti Parvan of the Mahābhārata also, Viṣṇu is described as reclining on the coils of the serpent⁴.

The serpent Śeṣa is recognized as a form of Viṣṇu⁵. It symbolises eternity⁶ as his name Ananta suggests. It

-
1. The term has been used to denote all the forms of Viṣṇu associated with Śeṣa, including the Śeṣaśāyī.
 2. Mahābhārata, III, 194, 8-15.
 3. Jayākhya Samhitā, (ed. Bhattacharya B.) Baroda, 1931, II, 34-36.
 4. Mahābhārata, XII, 47, 48.
 5. Ibid., III, 187, 10.
 6. DeSouza J.P., The Serpent as a symbol of Life and Immortality, Journal of Indian History, Vol. XLIV, Part II, August 1966. p. 441ff.



is also associated with Balarāma, the brother of Vāsudeva. In fact Balarāma is considered to be an incarnation of Śeṣa¹. So it seems that when the cult of Viṣṇu was evolving, the Nāga worship had a definite role to play in its evolution. In short as Gonda has surmised, "Viṣṇu sleeps on Śeṣa and Viṣṇu is Śeṣa, Śeṣa is the form of Supreme Being"². Viṣṇu reclining on Śeṣa represents him in his eternal existence.

I

Viṣṇu and Śeṣa are generally represented together in the image of Śeṣaśāyī, though the standing and the sitting images of Viṣṇu with Śeṣa are not unknown. The standing images of Viṣṇu under the serpent-hood are not described in the texts on iconography but such images have come to light, though very few in number. A square stone in the Allahabad Museum, datable to the 5th century A.D., represents the four-handed Viṣṇu with serpent-hood. The image is much mutilated but it seems to be holding the usual emblems of Viṣṇu. There are clear traces of the snake-hood behind the image. This is the first image of Viṣṇu of this kind known to us so far. (Allahabad Museum No. 259).

There are a few such images known from eastern part

1. Mahābhārata, I, 67, 91.

2. Gonda, Aspects of Early Visnuism, p. 152.

- of India, in the collection of the Asutosh and the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Museums. These images show a great deal of Buddhist influence and hence are treated in the chapter on the composite images.

II

The seated image of Viṣṇu on Śeṣa is described in detail in South Indian text. The image is rightly designated Ādimūrti because it represents Viṣṇu before the first creation. "The god should be seated on Ananta with the right leg folded and the left one hanging down. The right hand should be placed on the right knee and the left hand on the thigh. The other two hands hold the disc and the conch. The serpent should have either five or seven hoods. He is decked with ornaments and is flanked by Bhṛgu and the ṛsis and Śankara"¹. The south Indian examples of the type have been published by T. A. G. Rao, from Badami and Aihole². The form does not seem

1. अनन्तौत्संगसमासीनां दक्षिणपादमाकुञ्च्य वामं प्रसार्य दक्षिणहस्तं तदनोर्ध्वं सन्धस्य वामहस्तं वामजानुर्ध्वं प्रसार्य चतुर्बाहुं चक्रशंखं फणान् पञ्च सप्त वा क्षिन्मौलिनं प्रवालाभं सर्वाभरणभूषितं दक्षिणे मृगं वामे शंकरं तद्रूपं कौतुकं प्रतिष्ठोक्तक्रमेण प्रतिष्ठां कारयेत् ।

Vaikhāṇasāgama, Pātala 60.

2. Rao T.A.G., Elements of Hindu Iconography, Madras, 1914. Vol. I. p. I. Pl. XXV, XXX.

to have been favourite in north India because only a couple of images of this kind have come to light from there. On the top of the doorway of the main sanctum of the Daśavatāra temple at Deogarh, can be seen Viṣṇu seated on the coils of the serpent canopied by his seven hoods. His lower right hand is placed on his knee and the upper one holds the disc. The upper left hand is in the abhaya-mudrā while the other holds the conch. His left leg hanging down, is being shampooed by Lakṣmī who is sitting on the ground. To the right of the main figure is a dwarf probably the Vāmana Ayatāra of Viṣṇu and to his left is Nṛsimha Avatāra. Both of them are shown paying their respect to Viṣṇu, the Lord of Creation, with the añjali-mudrā¹.

An exactly similar image of Viṣṇu is in the Udaya-giri cave at Bhuvanesvara, reproduced by Daniélou Alain². Both of these images date as early as the 5th century A.D., suggesting thereby the prevalence of this iconographic form of Viṣṇu in that period, which later on seems to have been given up completely. We may infer from its early representations of Badami and Aihole and its persistence in the south, that this form may have been introduced to north India from the south, particularly Deccan.

1. Vats M.S., The Gupta Temple at Deogarh, MAI.

No. 70. Pl. IX, a.

2. Alain Daniélou, Hindu Polytheism. London, 1964. Pl. XI.

III

A very popular form of Viṣṇu with Śeṣa is the Śeṣasāyī or the Jalāsāyana mūrti. The description of this type of image is almost identical in different texts.

The Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa gives a detailed account of the Jalāsāyana Viṣṇu. The god is to be carved reclining on the coils of the serpent Śeṣa amidst the waters. One of his hands is resting on the thigh and the other is near his navel. One of the upper hands is near the head and the other holds the santānamañjarī. Brahmā is to be carved in the lotus issuing from the navel of Hari while the demons should be holding the lotus stalk¹.

The description given in the south Indian texts is much more detailed. The image as usual is divided into yoga, bhoga, vīra and abhicāraka. The Yoga-sāyana mūrti is only two handed, the right hand placed near the pillow and the other is in the kāṭaka pose. By his side should be placed Bhṛgu and Mārkaṇḍeya and near his feet the demons Madhu and Kaitabha; while on the lotus issuing from Viṣṇu's navel should be Brahmā. Above the image on the back wall should be sculptured the āyudhapurusas Garuḍa, Viśvakṣena and seven ṛṣis - all in the añjali-

1. Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa, V, 86-90.

mudrā. The Bhoga-śayana-mūrti has four hands two of them same as in the Yoga-śayana, but nothing is said about the other two hands. Goddess Lakṣmī should be seated near his head holding a lotus in her right hand. Bhūmidevī should be shampooing his left foot. To the right of the main image should be Mārkaṇḍeya and to his left Bhṛgu. On the south wall of the shrine should be Brahmā and on the north Śiva. Near his feet should be demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha. Brahmā should be seated on the lotus issuing from Viṣṇu's navel, to his right should be five āyudha-puruṣas and Garuḍa, Sūrya. To the left of Brahmā should be Aśvins and Tamburu and Nārada represented as young children.

In the Vīra-śayan mūrti, Viṣṇu holds the conch and the disc in his two hands, the other two being same as in the other images. By the side of his feet should be Lakṣmī and Bhūmidevī. The demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha should be holding the feet of Viṣṇu in their hands. Brahmā is seated on the lotus. The other accessory figures are to be carved as in the other images.

The Abhicārakamūrti represents the figure of Viṣṇu reclining flatly on the coils of the serpent¹.

1. Vaikhānasāgama, Paṭala 60.

The theme of Śeṣaśāyī was quite familiar to the people and the artists of the Gupta period. A very fine example of Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu has been preserved on the Gupta temple at Deogarh and is reproduced by several authors¹. Viṣṇu is shown elegantly reclining on the serpent bed with his right leg slightly bent and his upper left hand supporting his head canopied by seven serpent-hoods. His lower left hand is resting on the bed, the upper right is touching the canopy and the lower right is supported on his right knee. His right leg is stretched on the legs of Bhūmidevī. Behind her is standing a caurī-bearer and to her left appears Garuḍa, having beaky nose. He is seizing a serpent, wound round his neck. Rao, Banerjea, and Vats have wrongly identified him as the āyudha-puruṣa, as also the caurī-bearer standing by his side. Brahmā is seated on a lotus in the centre which is issuing from the waters and not from the navel of Viṣṇu. He holds a kamandalu in his hand. To his left stand Indra and Kārtikeya seated on their mounts, the elephant and the peacock respectively. To the left of Brahmā appear Śiva and Pārvatī seated on the bull and to the extreme left is

-
1. Banerjea, Development of Hindu Iconography, P. 407. Pl. XXII, &
 Vats, op. cit. P. 14-15. Pl. X, b.
 Rao, T. A. G., Elements of Hindu Iconography, Vol. I, Part I. p. 110. Pl. XXXII.

probably a kinnara. On the lower part of the panel are shown the Gadādevī, the Ākrapuruṣa, the Śaṅkhaṭpuruṣa and Khadgaṭpuruṣa. The demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha are holding swords in their hands and their left arms are akimbo.

Another contemporary image has been represented in the cave No. 14 of the Udayagiri caves. The image is much simpler in composition to the one described above. Viṣṇu is flatly lying on the bed of serpent coils. One of his right hands supports his head and the other three are broken. The vanamālā can be seen flowing down the knees. On the top of the panel are Garuḍa, the āyudha-puruṣas and the demons¹.

The 6th century image of Viṣṇu Śeṣaśāyī is still surviving on the top of the gateway of the main shrine of the Rājīvalocana temple at Rajim. It shows rather crude workmanship, and hence its interest lies only in the fact that it is one of the early representations of Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu. One of his left hands supports his head while the other holds the conch. One of the right hands holds the disc and the other is held straight and looks as if it is pointing at the demon with the first finger.

1. Annual Administrative Report of the Arch. Dept., Gwalior State, for the year 1932-33. Pl. VI, a.

Bhūmidevī is massaging his feet and by her sides appear probably the demons. Brahmā is seated on the lotus issuing from his navel. Below on the panel is shown Garuḍa holding two snakes in his hands and flanking him are the Nāgas in the añjali-mudrā. It is quite likely that the temple was dedicated to Śeṣasāyī Viṣṇu¹.

The Śeṣasāyī form, though known fairly well to the people, did not acquire a very important place in Viṣṇu's iconography. Only the scattered representations of Śeṣasāyī have been found. There is hardly any change or evolution in the representation of this form. The later images are at times accompanied by a number of accessory figures like the ṛsis, the grahas, the mātṛkā figures, the incarnations of Viṣṇu, etc. Apart from this minor elaboration the main figure remains the same and does not show any evolution.

A 9th century image from the temple of Jagannāthaji near Dilvara has been published by Dr. U.P. Shah. The image is partly mutilated. Viṣṇu is shown sleeping on the coils of the serpent whose seven hoods form a canopy on his head. Only the right hands of the god have survived, the upper one supporting his head as well as the mace and the lower one holds the lotus. A small stalk

1. ^{Sh}Dikṣit M.G., Sirpur and Rajim Temples. Pl. 82.

issuing from the navel of Viṣṇu suggests the presence of Brahmā¹.

A very intricately carved figure of Śeṣasāyī, found from Badoli, is reproduced by R.C. Agrawal. The whole panel is divided into four subsidiary rows. Some of the figures are mutilated and their identification is difficult. The top row represents the grahas, the mātrkās and the ṛsis. The second row represents in all probability the life episodes of different incarnations of Viṣṇu and the third row shows the āyudhapuruṣas and the demons. The main figure is reclining on the coils of Śeṣa and his head is canopied by a huge snake-hood. The upper left hand of the god holds the disc and the upper right supports the head. The mace is lying by the side of this arm. Both of the lower hands are mutilated. Only the top of the goddess has survived. There are no signs indicating the lotus on the navel of Viṣṇu².

The Kotah Museum has a nice panel depicting the Śeṣasāyī Viṣṇu. The god is reclining on the serpent bed having the mace, the disc, the conch in his three hands and held probably the lotus in his mutilated right hand. The three-faced Brahmā is seated on the lotus. The

-
1. Shah U.P., Sculptures from Sāmlāji and Rodā, Pl. 9.
 2. Agrawal R.C., Kishan Vilas. Marg. No. XII. Fig. 8.

mutilated part flanking Brahmā seems to have represented the demons and the āyudha puruṣas. The top of the panel shows the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu and the seven ṛṣis. Lakṣmī is sitting at the feet of the god.¹

An image in the Lucknow Museum (No. H.120) is an interesting piece because Viṣṇu has his head towards the eastern direction instead of the western direction as in all the other images. (fig. 16).

The 11th century image from Chattarpur in central India is preserved in the Khajuraho Museum. Viṣṇu holds the mace in one of his right hands and his head is resting on the folded upper left hand holding the disc, which is seen to the right of his head. Behind him are seen the attendants and the demons. On the top of the panel are carved the incarnations of Viṣṇu. Below the serpent bed are the conch, the vedi being worshipped by some men and a horse represents probably Hayagrīva.

A very peculiar image has come to light from Bamangola in Malda district, now preserved in the State Archaeological Gallery of Bengal. Viṣṇu is lying on the serpent bed with Lakṣmī shampooing his feet. The only noteworthy feature is that even the goddess is canopied

1. Anand Mulk Raj, Remnants Stored Against the Ruins, Marg, No. XII, Pl. No. 4.

by a serpent hood, which is never seen in any other image. The image is datable to the 11th century A.D. (State Arch. Gallery of Bengal No. 5173).

A unique representation of Śeṣaśāyī comes from Orissa. The sculptor has carved the image of Viṣṇu on a circular disc with the spokes around, representing the cakra. On the surface of the disc are carved the wavy lines to indicate the ocean or the *primaeval* waters. Amidst that is the serpent bed with the four-handed Viṣṇu on it. There is a small figure of a goddess near the feet of the god. Brahmā is seated on the lotus rising from the navel of Viṣṇu, rising above the waters. It represents Viṣṇu on Ananta, amidst the *primaeval* waters on the wheel of creation. (fig. 17)

These in short are the few representations of Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu. As already stated above, they do not show any evolution from the iconographical point of view. At the most, what we find is the little elaboration in the representation of the accessory figures. This form was known from an early period and had even migrated to Nepal, as evident from its image found from that part. It also continued to exist in the later period but never acquired such great a position deserving shrine dedication to him.

LAKSMĪ-NĀRĀYAṆA

It is rather surprising that inspite of Lakṣmī being associated with Viṣṇu from an early period, their images in the āliṅgana-mudrā or even otherwise are neither referred to in any of the early texts on iconography, nor is any image found prior to the close of the Gupta period. Even the images of Viṣṇu flanked by his consort are not common in that period as already indicated in the chapter on Viṣṇu images.

Lakṣmī, as a goddess of prosperity, was acknowledged from very early period, as evidenced by the images of Gaja-Lakṣmī found from Barhut and other places.¹ Independent images of Lakṣmī have been described in detail by the texts on iconography like Viṣṇu-dharmottaram² etc. In the Jayākhyā Samhitā³ she appears as a consort of Viṣṇu forming a pair not only with Viṣṇu but also with Vaikunṭha. The sculptural evidence, however, show that she is first associated with the Śeṣa-Nārāyaṇa form of Viṣṇu, and only in the later period her association with Viṣṇu was emphasized.

I

The standing images of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa are very few and negligible.⁴ Even the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas like the Bhāgavata Purāṇa⁵ or Viṣṇu Purāṇa do not describe Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa image in detail.

-
1. Banerjea J.N., Development of Hindu Iconography, p.374-75.
 2. Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 82.
 3. Jayākhyā Samhitā, 33, 55-56.
 4. For details see Desai Kalpana, Some Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa Images from Western India, JOI, Vol. XIV, March, 1965. pp.392 ff.
 5. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Nitya Sagar Press, Bombay 1916.

The Pārānanda Sūtra¹ also gives a simple description of the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa image. "Lord Hari is to be meditated upon as having the human body with dark complexion and wearing yellow garments. He has four hands and is accompanied by Lakṣmī. In his right hands he holds the disc and the mace, and in his left ones, the lotus and the conch. There should be his Garuḍa vāhana and the god should be adorned with various ornaments."

The Viśvakarmāsāstra² quoted by Hemādri, gives an elaborate description of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa accompanied by Siddhi and the other accessory figures. "Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa are to be carved together in their divine forms. On the right is Viṣṇu and on the left Lakṣmī with one of her arms round his neck and the other holding the lotus. She is beautifully modelled and her young body is decked with ornaments. Siddhi is to be represented by her side below the god. The conch and the disc are to be represented in their personified forms as dwarfs with folded hands and are

1. Pārānanda Sūtra, Gaekwad Oriental Series, LIV, 1931. Sūtra 19, 37.

2. Hemadri, Caturvarga Cintāmani, Vratakhanda, Pl. I, Calcutta, 1878.

equipped with the yogapatṭa".¹

A sculpture from Abaneri in the Amber Museum depicts Viṣṇu in the tribhaṅga pose, having four hands, two of which are mutilated. In the two upper hands are held the mace and the disc. His lower right hand is supported on the right shoulder of Lakṣmī. The emblem in the hand of Lakṣmī is not very clear. Two figures with folded hands are seen flanking the main image².

M.R. Majmudar has published a marble image from Vijapur, little later in date than the one described above, and now being worshipped in a temple³. The conch and the disc are placed in the right hands of Viṣṇu, while the attributes in the other two hands are not clear. Lakṣmī, standing to the left of Viṣṇu embraces him with her right hand, while her other hand holds the lotus. Both of them are

1. लक्ष्मीनारायणोक्तयोः संयुक्तौ दिव्यरूपिणौ ।
दक्षिणस्या विमोर्मुर्तिलक्ष्मीर्मुर्तिस्तु वामतः ॥
दक्षिणः कण्ठलग्नोस्या वामोहस्तः सरोजमृत् ।
विमोर्वामकरोलक्ष्म्याः कुक्षिभागस्थितः सदा ॥
.....

सिन्धुः कार्या समीपस्था चामरग्राहिणी शुभा ।
कर्तव्यं वाहनं सव्यं देवाद्योभागं सदा ॥
शंखचक्रधरो तस्य द्वौ कार्या पुरणौ पुरः ।
वामनो हारकैयूर किरीट मणिमूषणौ ॥
उपासको समीपस्थो प्रभोर्ब्रह्मसिवात्मको ।

रसनां योगपट्टश्च शिखामञ्जलिमास्थितौ ॥

Caturvarga Cintāmani, Vrata Khanda, Part I. p. 113-4.

2. Desai Kalpana, op. cit. fig. 3.

3. Majmudar M.R., ^{op. cit.} p. 48, Pl. II.

adorned with a vanamālā.

A standing image of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa from Manikpur near Allahabad, is in the Allahabad Museum. They have a benign expression on their faces gently looking at each other. Nārāyaṇa holds the mace and the lotus in his right hands, the upper left resting on the shoulder of Lakṣmī, holds the disc and the lower left holds the conch. The cakrapurusa is seen by the side of the god, and a caukri-bearer by the side of the goddess. Stylistically more akin to the Khajuraho sculptures, the image is datable to the 11th century A.D. (fig. 19)

Two standing images of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa of superior artistic merit are in the Pārśvanātha and the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho. The image on the wall of the Pārśvanātha¹ temple shows Viṣṇu in dvibhaṅga pose with the disc and the conch in his two upper hands. His lower right hand is placed on the mace supported on the ground. He is looking lovingly at Lakṣmī whom he embraces with his lower left arm. Lakṣmī, returning his look coyly, embraces him with one hand and in the other hand holds the lotus. Both of them are richly ornamented.

The other, iconographically different, figure is on the south wall of the Lakṣmaṇa temple² at Khajuraho. Here,

-
1. Auboyer Jeannine, Khajuraho, Plate CLXXI.
 2. Ibid., Plate XCIII.

Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa are not embracing each other as in many other images, but they are standing by each others side with a calm and graceful expression on their faces.

II

The seated images of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa are more popular than the standing ones. The Skanda Purāṇa describes Lakṣmī seated to the left of Nārāyaṇa who holds the disc and the conch in his hands, with the other left arm he embraces Lakṣmī.¹

According to the Rūpamaṇḍana, Nārāyaṇa holding his usual emblems and Lakṣmī holding a lotus, should be riding on Garuḍa.²

One of the earliest images known so far has come to light from Pindara datable to the 8th century A.D., and is preserved in collections of the Jamnagar Museum. The image is much mutilated preserving only the figure of Viṣṇu seated on Garuḍa with Lakṣmī on his left thigh. Nothing can be said about the emblems.³

1. शंसकगदापाणिं दिव्यालंकारभूषितम् ।
रत्नपादुकयोः पृष्ठे विन्यस्तचरणाम्बुजम् ॥
व्याकोशपुण्डरीकादां प्रसन्नवदनं विभुम् ।
वामपार्श्वे स्थितां लक्ष्मीं वामेनालिंग्यबाहुना ।
नागवल्लीदलं बद्धमाददानं श्रियाहृतम् ॥

Skanda Purāṇa, (Venkatesvara Press, Bombay, 1909)

Vaiṣṇava Khanda, Puruṣottama Mahātmya, 5, 8-9.

2. Rūpamaṇḍana, (Devātamūrti Prakaraṇa and Rūpamaṇḍana),
Calcutta, 1936. IV, 34-36.
3. Subrahmanyam R., Pindara and Its Antiquities, JOI. Vol.XIV.
March, 1965. p. 431. fig. XII.

A small temple of Jayāditya at Nagara, near Cambay has a blue schist image belonging to the early 10th century.¹ The four-handed Nārāyaṇa is seated on a partly mutilated throne, with his consort Lakṣmī on his left thigh. He holds in his right hands the lotus and the mace, the upper left hand which rests on the shoulder of Lakṣmī holds the conch while the lower left passing delicately round the waist of his consort holds the disc. Lakṣmī embraces her lord with her right arm and in her left hand she holds the lotus. Her head is adorned with a very peculiar type of coiffure. Her right leg is hanging down the throne while the left one is a little tucked up. On top of the sculpture, on either side are seen Śiva and Brahmā.

The Sūrya temple and the Sachīā Mātā temple at Osian also bear the image of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa. Both these images are almost identical in their iconographical details having no peculiarity in particular.²

Burgess has reproduced an image of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa on Garuḍa from Kasara, datable to the 11th century A.D. Nārāyaṇa holds in his upper hands the mace and the lotus and his lower left arm embraces his consort.³ Cousens also refers to an image found from Sejakpur.⁴

Two beautiful images have been noticed from Vijapur in Gujarat. The one in black marble, flying in the temple at Valam, has been published by Mr. M.R. Majmudar.⁵ In his right hands,

1. Desai Kalpana S., op.cit. fig. 1.

2. Bhandarkar R.D., The Temples of Osian, ASIAR, 1908-09. p.106 and 111.

3. Burgess and Cousens, Architectural Antiquities of Northern Gujarat, London, 1903. p. 106, Pl. XCI.

4. Cousens H., Somanath and Other Mediaeval Temples of Kathiawad, Calcutta, 1931. p. 58.

5. Majmudar M.R., Studies in Varieties of Vishnu Images in Gujarat, JGRS. p. 48, Pl. III.

Nārāyaṇa holds the conch and the lotus, the emblems in the upper left hand is not very clear. The lower left arm embraces Lakṣmī.

An image with Lakṣmī placing her hand on her lap was found by U.P. Shah in Navasari district. Viṣṇu has his lower right hand in the varada-mudrā, his upper right hand holds the mace, his upper left hand holds the disc above the head of Lakṣmī, probably due to the lack of space, the lower left as in other cases passes round the waist of Lakṣmī.

The Baroda Museum has a marble image of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa from Khali, near Siddhpur. Nārāyaṇa holds the disc and the mace in his two upper hands. The lower right probably held the conch which is slightly mutilated and the lower left embraces Lakṣmī¹. These sculptures from Gujarat are specimens of the twelfth century A.D.

A Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa image of excellent workmanship in black stone is preserved in the Lucknow Museum. Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa, richly ornamented are seated on a pedestal with their feet supported by the hands of Garuḍa seated in front. Lakṣmī seated on the left thigh of Nārāyaṇa passes her right arm round his shoulder while her left hand is resting on her lap. Nārāyaṇa holds the mace and the lotus in his two upper hands, his lower left arm embraces his consort and the lower right hand rests on his lap. On either side of the main image

1. Desai Kalpana S., op. cit., fig. ii.

on the top are Brahmā and Viṣṇu in dhyāna-mudrā flanked by Matsya and Kūrma. The image belongs to the 11th century A.D. (fig. 18)

A similar image from Gadhwā in U.P., is now in the National Museum. It is an interesting in bronze assignable to the 12th century. The main image is accompanied by a number of attendant gods¹. An image in the Khajuraho Museum, with similar iconographical features, is datable to the 12th century A.D.

R.C. Kak refers to an image carved on the Baoli of Dhan on the way from Thara - Kadwal to Kuhn near Basohli. Nārāyaṇa holds in his right hands the mace and the conch and in his left hands he carries the disc and the lotus. Lakṣmī with the end of her scarf over her head, sits on his left knee with folded hands². At Babbur, six miles away from Mansar, in the Kālī temple, one of the niches of the north wall contains a slab on which are carved the figures of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī³.

Apart from the stylistic varieties there is hardly any iconographic peculiarity displayed in these images.

1. Sivarammurti C., Indian Bronzes, Bombay, 1962. Pl. 19.

2. Kak R.C., Sculptures from Basohli and Ramnagar,
Indian Art and Letters, Vol. VII, 1933.
No. 2, p. 62.

3. Ibid., p. 87. Pl. XV.



These are the types of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa images commonly found in different parts of India. Apart from these, we have a very unique description of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa in the śilparatna. Nārāyaṇa is described here as having eight hands, holding, besides the usual four emblems, vidyā (the book), the lotus, the mirror and the golden kalāśa¹.

The use of the expression ekibhūtam vapuh would suggest that the author of the Silparatna has conceived of a half Lakṣmī and half Nārāyaṇa image after Śiva Ardhanārīśvara. The same text uses the term Ardhāmbikā² while describing the Ardhanārīśvara form. Since the author has not specified that the first four symbols are of Nārāyaṇa and the next four of Lakṣmī, it is likely that the author here has in mind an Ardha Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa form.

1.

हस्ते बिभ्रत् सरसिजगदाशतचक्राणि विधां
पद्मादशीं कनककलशं मेघविधुद्विलासम् ।
वामोत्तुंगस्तनमविरलाकल्पमाश्लेषलोमा -
देकीभूतं वपुरवतु वः पुण्डरीकादालम्ब्योः ॥

Silparatna, Trivandrum Sanskrit Series,
Trivandrum, 1929, 23, 23.

also compare Ibid., 23, 75.

2. Ibid., 25, 76.

No such image of Ardha Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa has come to light so far, from the mediaeval period in India. An image datable to the 17th century has been published by Dr. Pal. This image from Nepal has eight hands, holding the conch, the disc, the mace and the lotus in the right hands, while in the left holding the book, the lotus, the mirror and the kalāśa. Iconographically it tallies exactly with the description of the Śilparatna, except for the figures of Garuḍa and the tortoise to the right and the left of the main figure. Dr. Pal also refers to two similar but earlier images, hailing from Nepal. In that land, the form seems to have gained popularity in the mediaeval period, but it is very surprising that in India this variety has not been found.

-
1. Pal Pratapaditya, Notes on Five Sculptures From Nepal, British Museum Quarterly, Vol. XXIX. No. 1-2. p. 32. PP1. XV.
 2. Ibid., p. 33.

VAIKUNṬHA-CATURMŪRTI

Vaikunṭha Caturmūrti has acquired special importance in the iconography of Viṣṇu due to the deep symbolism of its four faces. Iconographically it is an attempt at synthesising under the principal form of Viṣṇu, some of his incarnations. The Vyūha theory of the Pāñcarātra symbolically represents Vāsudeva, as the Highest Being, together with his three emanations, i.e. Samkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. Etymologically the meaning of the term Vaikunṭha has not been determined so far. However, it may be derived from vi + kunṭha, meaning 'sharp' or 'not blunt'. It is significant that the earliest references to Vaikunṭha do not connect him with Viṣṇu, though in the Epic and the Pauranic texts, it invariably signifies Viṣṇu.

The Rig-veda (X, 47-50), are designated as the Indra-Vaikunṭha hymns by the commentators. According to some of them, however, Indra-Vaikunṭha is the name of the

composer of the hymns (!). Brhaddevatā¹ relates an interesting legend about the birth of Vaikuṇṭha.

It says that Vaikuṇṭha is the son of Vikunṭhā, an Āsurī daughter of Prajāpati, who desired to have a son like Indra. She undertook severe penance to attain her desire. Indra himself was thus born of her as Vaikuṇṭha and destroyed the demons.

In the Brāhmanas and the Upaniṣads, Vaikuṇṭha is exclusively an epithet of Indra. The Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad² identifies Indra - Vaikuṇṭha with aparājita senā - the invincible army and further observes that the one who adheres to him is always triumphant and unconquerable. Almost similar references are found in the

1. Brhaddevatā, (ed.) Macdonell A.A., Harward Oriental Series. 1904.

प्रजापत्यासुरी त्वासीद् विकुण्ठा नाम नामतः ।

सेच्छन्तीन्द्रसमं पुत्रं तैपेऽथ समुहत्पः ॥

सा प्रजापतिः कामान् तैपेऽथ विविधान् वरान् ।

तस्यां चेन्द्रः स्वयं जज्ञे जिघांसुर्देत्य दानवान् ॥

VII, 49-50.

See also Yāska's Nirukta VII, 2. Sāyaṇa in his commentary to the Rig-veda X, 47 also relates the same story.

2.

इन्द्रो वैकुण्ठो पराजिता सेनेति वा अहमेतमुपास इति ।

स च य एवमुपासते जिष्णुर्हंपराजिष्णुर्मवत्यन्यतस्य

जायी ॥

Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, II, i, 6.

Satapatha Brāhmaṇa¹ and in the Kauśitakī Upaniṣad².

The Jaiminiya Upaniṣad has a significant passage where Indra is identified with the sun and is given different names befitting his position in the firmament³. He is called Vaikunṭha when the sun is at its zenith at midday. It, therefore, symbolises the great height, which is equivalent to the Parama pāda of Viṣṇu referred to in the R̥g-veda, which is the highest abode of Viṣṇu and Indra where no other has access. This clearly confirms the concept of Viṣṇu's Vaikunṭha form, symbolising the Para aspect of god Viṣṇu.

It is not a matter of surprise that Vaikunṭha in the epics and the Purāṇas has been correlated with Viṣṇu. Indra and Viṣṇu are closely allied, as Macdonell says, "The closeness of their alliance is indicated by the fact that in the hymns extolling Viṣṇu. Indra is the only deity incidentally associated with him".⁴ Viṣṇu is Indra's intimate

1. Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, 14, 5, 1, 6.

2. Kauśitakī Upaniṣad, IV, 7.

3. स वा एष इन्द्रो वैमृष उद्यन् भवति सविता, उदितो मित्रः, संगकाले
इन्द्रः, वैकुण्ठो मध्यन्दिने -----

Jaiminiya Upaniṣad, IV, 10, 10.

4. Macdonell A.A., Vedic Mythology, Benaras, 1963. p. 39.

friend¹. Viṣṇu strode his three steps by the energy (ojas) of Indra². He greatly contributes to Indra's success in his exploits. "He is more than a mere companion, he is yujyāksakhā (Rig-veda, I, 22, 19) equal in rank and power, similar to Indra himself."³

Indra recedes into the background in the Brāhmanas and merges into the personality of the all-pervading Viṣṇu. The fact is amply justified by an interesting story in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa⁴. Several gods performed a sacrificial session. They said, "whoever of us shall reach the end of the sacrifice first, shall be the most excellent of us." Viṣṇu first attained that state and therefore he became the highest and the most powerful of gods. Once he took his bow and kept it resting on its end. The bow string was gnawed up by ants and the string thus, springing asunder, cut off the head of Viṣṇu which fell down and became Sūrya. All the gods then rushed to Viṣṇu, but Indra reaching him first enclosed him in his own self, and gained the possession of Viṣṇu's glory. The sun and Indra together "coincide with, derive their existence or important qualities

1. Rig-veda, I, 22.

2. Ibid., VIII, 12.

3. Gonda, Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism, (1954) p. 32.

4. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, 14, 1, 1, 1, ff.

from Viṣṇu".¹ The identification of both Indra and Viṣṇu with the solar luminary is established,² when the concept of Vaikunṭha was probably transferred to Viṣṇu when his cult was rising to its height.

In the Mahābhārata it is said that Hari took the form of Vaikunṭha, the terminator of the blun.³ It also refers to Viṣṇu as Vaikunṭha in several other places.⁴

According to the Brhaddevatā, Indra was born of Vikunṭhā while in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, it is said that Hari himself was born of Vikunṭhā by his own will.⁵ The Bhāgavata version of the story says that Bhagavān was

1. Gonda, op. cit. p. 168.

2. In the Rig-veda, IV, 26, Indra says that he was Sūrya; in II, 30, he receives the epithet of Sūrya. Satapatha Brāhmaṇa I, 6, 18 identifies Indra with the sun. Indra and Viṣṇu both are Ādityas in the Mahābhārata.

इन्द्रो विवस्वान्पूषा च त्वष्टा च सविता तथा ।

पर्जन्यश्चैव विष्णुश्च आदित्या पावकाचिणः ॥

Mahābhārata, I, 114, 55-56.

3. पुराणेषु हरिर्भूत्वा वैकुण्ठो कुण्डसायकः ।

सुरासुरानवस्फूर्जन्निब्रवीत्कै जयन्तिवति ॥

Ibid., VI, 775, 15.

4. Ibid., I, 58, 49; III, 100, 17; XII, 43, 5.

5. चाक्षुषे चान्तरे देवो वैकुण्ठः पुरुषोत्तमः ।

वैकुण्ठायामसी जज्ञे वैकुण्ठैर्देवैः सह ॥

Viṣṇu Purāṇa, III, 1, 41.

also compare Kūrma Purāṇa, Calcutta, 1890. 1, 51, 32.



born of Vikunṭhā by his own power, to the wife of Śubhra¹.

The Viṣṇu Vaikunṭha form is known in the Mahābhārata² as Mūrticatustaya, but excepting the indication of four faces, nothing is said about its iconography. The first iconographical reference to the image of Vaikunṭha is found in the Jayākhyā Samhitā, a Pāñcarātra text, assigned to the Gupta period³.

"The Lord, the creator of the universe, is to be meditated upon as having four faces - Vaikunṭha (Vāsu-deva?), Nṛsimha, Varāha and Kapila - and four hands holding śankha, cakra, gadā and padma. He is mounted on Garuḍa and is adorned with ornaments and auspicious marks, etc."⁴

1. पत्नी विकुण्ठा शुभ्रस्य वैकुण्ठेः सुरसतमेः ।
तयोः स्वकलया जले वैकुण्ठो भगवान्स्वयम् ॥

Bhāgavata Purāṇa, VIII, 5, 3.

2. Mahābhārata, XII, 326, 43.

3. Jayākhyā Samhitā, Gaekwad Oriental Series, LIV. p. 34.
The text belongs to the middle of the 5th century A.D., according to Dr. Bhattacharya.

4. अनादिनिधनं देवं जगत्सृष्टारमीश्वरम् । ध्यायेच्चतुर्भुजं विप्रं शंखचक्रगदाधरम् ॥
चतुर्वक्त्रं सुनयनं सुकान्तं पद्मपाणिनम् । वैकुण्ठं नरसिंहास्यं वाराहं कपिलाननम् ॥
शुक्लं त्रिश्वराढ्यं सर्वाभरणभूषितम् । सर्वलक्षणसंपन्नं माल्याम्बरधरं विभुम् ॥
किरीटकोस्तुभधरं कर्पूरालिप्तविग्रहम् । सूर्यायुतसङ्ख्यां सर्वदेवनमस्कृतम् ॥

Ibid., Patala, 6, Śl, 73-76.

The Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa, another text belonging to the Gupta period¹, describes the eight-handed variety of the Vaikunṭha image.

"Viṣṇu, the god of gods, should be represented as seated on Garuḍa, wearing a celestial yellow garment, with Kaustubha brightening his bosom and with all sorts of ornaments. His complexion should be like that of a cloud laden with water. He has four faces and eight arms. The eastern face is called Saumya (i.e. placid), southern Nārasimha, western Kāpila and northern Vārāha. He wears a vanamālā and carries in his right hands the arrow, the rosary, and the club, etc., and in his left hands the shield and towel, and the bow".²

Here only six emblems are mentioned, but emending musalāsayah for musalādayah, sīram for cīram, and dhanuś-

1. Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa, (ed.) Priyabala Shah, Baroda, 1961. vol. I. Introduction p. XVI.

2.
 देवदेवं तथा विष्णुं कारयेद्गुरुस्थितम् ॥
 कौस्तुभोदभासितोरस्कं सर्वाभरणधारिणम् ।
 सजलाम्बुदसञ्छायं पीतदिव्याम्बरं तथा ॥
 मुखाश्च कायाभित्वारो बाहवो द्विगुणास्तथा ।
 सौम्यं तु वदनं पूर्वं नारसिंहं तु दक्षिणम् ॥
 कापिलं पश्चिमं वक्त्रं तथा वाराहमुत्तरम् ।
 तस्य दक्षिणहस्तेषु बाणादामुसलादयः ॥
 चर्मं चीरं धनुश्चेन्द्रं चापेषु (वामेषु?) वनमालिनः ।

Ibid, III, 44, 9-13.

cakra for dhanuscendram, the order of all the eight emblems would be as follows: an arrow, a rosary, a club and a sword in the right hands, and a shield, a ploughshare, a bow and a disc in the left hands¹.

The textual and the iconographical evidences point to the fact that Vaikunṭha Caturmūrti must have originated in the Gupta period. The Nṛsimha and the Varāha forms of Viṣṇu dominated in the field of Vaiṣṇavism in that period. The famous Udayagiri Caves representing the colossal Varāha as well as Nṛsimha figures, and many other images of Varāha and Nṛsimha datable to the Gupta period, attest the strength of the Varāha and the Nṛsimha cults. The existence of the cults of Varāha and Nṛsimha is further supported by the Tantras bearing the name of Varāha and Nṛsimha to whom they are dedicated. For example the Varāha Pañcarātra, Varāhi Tantra, Nṛsimha Tantra etc. may be mentioned. A temple dedicated to Nṛsimha is referred to in the vamsāvali of the kings of Kashmir².

In the concept of Vaikunṭha Caturmūrti the only factor that needs a little explanation is the fierce-looking face of Kapila as one of the four faces of the god. The literal

-
1. Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa, (ed.) Priyabala Shah, Baroda, 1961. Vol. II, P. 141, footnote 1.
 2. Vogel J. Ph., Antiquities of Chamba State, Calcutta, 1911. Part I. p. 85. Sl. 45.

meaning of the term kapila is red or tawny. We first meet with the word in the Rig-veda X, 27, 16¹. The context and its meaning is not very clear. Sāyaṇācārya infers that this kapila refers to the famous sage Kapila², but this is definitely a later interpolation and therefore, is not accepted by scholars. Geldner and others believe that there being a reference to ten fingers, Kapila is either Agni or Soma. In the Rig-veda it is used as another name of Brhaspati or Agni³. In the Mahābhārata also, Kapila is identified with Agni⁴ and is also said to have his abode in Aditya, thus identifying him with the sun⁵. This Kapila, originally signifying Agni or the sun, was later identified with the famous Rṣi, the founder of the

1. दशानामेकं कपिलं समानं तं हित्वन्ति ब्रतवे पर्याय ।
गर्भः माता सुधितं वदणस्व वेनन्तं तुणयन्ती बिर्मर्दि ॥
Rig-veda, X, 27, 16.

2. Sāyaṇa:

कपिलं स्तन्नामानं तं प्रसिद्धमृणिम् ।

3. Geldner, Der Rig-veda. Vol. III, London, 1951.

"Man wird zunächst mit Oldenberg an die Finger und entsprechen bei Kapilam an Agni oder Soma denken.

----- Im Rig-veda, Mag er ein anderer Name für Brhaspati oder Agni sein."

ad. Rig-veda, X, 27, 16.

4.

अग्निः स कपिलो नाम सांख्ययोग प्रवर्तकः ॥

Mahābhārata, III, 211, 21.

5. Ibid., III, 3, 181.

Sāṅkhya system, who in course of time, came to be regarded as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Kapila is already counted as one of the forms of Vāsudeva in the Mahābhārata¹. The Śvetāśvetara Upaniṣad which follows the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy, identifies Kapila, the founder of the Sāṅkhya system, with Hiraṇyagarbha, the Prīmaeval Egg. It may, therefore, be suggested, as Weber does², that the Pāṇcarātrins or the Bhāgavatas, who accepted the Sāṅkhya philosophy, identified him with Vāsudeva.

The whole legend of the sage Kapila burning the sixty thousand sons of king Sagara is elaborated in the Vana Parvan³. It is said that sixty thousand valiant and arrogant sons of Sagara born of a boon, harassed the people. The gods appealed to Lord Viṣṇu to come to their rescue. At that time king Sagara was performing the horse-sacrifice, and the horse being lost, Sagara asked his sons to search for it. Failing to find the horse on the earth, they started digging the earth and came across a sage, whom they accused of hiding the horse. The sage, out of anger, opened his eyes and the fire emanating from his eyes reduced to ashes all the sixty thousand sons of Sagara.

The Rāmāyana also refers to Kapila as an avatāra of

1. Mahābhārata, III, 106, 2.

2. Weber A., Indische Studien, Berlin, 1850. Vol. I, p. 433.

3. Mahābhārata, III, 105 and 106.

Viṣṇu, who saved the earth tortured by the sons of Sagarā.¹ The same story is related laconically in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa as well². Thus, Kapila, originally representing Agni or Sūrya and a sage in the later time, stands for the fierce aspect of Viṣṇu³.

It is very strange that the later Śilpaśāstras prescribe the fourth face of the Vaikunṭha Caturmūrti as that of a woman, instead of Kapila. The emblems prescribed are also a little different from those prescribed by the Viṣṇudharmottaram. According to the Rūpa-mandana the image of Vaikunṭha has four heads, those of Puruṣa, Nṛsimha, Varāha and a woman. In his right hands he holds the mace, the sword, the arrow, and the discus, while in the left hands he holds the conchshell, the shield, the bow and the

-
1. Rāmāyana, ed. Bhatt G.H., Oriental Institute, Baroda. I, 39, 26-28.
 2. Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Venkatesvara Press, Bombay, 1910. IV, 4, 5-22.

3. ततः क्रुद्धो महाराज कपिलो मुनिसत्तमः ।
वासुदेवेति यं प्राहुः कपिलं मुनिसत्तमम् ॥
स च द्रुविर्वृतं कृत्वा तेजस्तैषु समुत्सृजन् ।
ददाह समुहातेजा मन्दबुद्धीन्स सागरान् ॥

Mahābhārata, III, 106, 2-3.

lotus ¹.

I

One of the earliest known iconographical representations of multifaced Viṣṇu is preserved in the Mathura Museum². It is a three-headed haloed figure, the central face being a human face, the right one that of a boar and the left one that of a lion. Two of the four arms are broken and the other two are placed on the conchshell and the disc respectively, represented in their personified forms. The vanamālā and the yajñopavīta hang from his shoulders. The central figure wears a mukuta. The figure is assigned to the Gupta period, round about the 6th century A.D. The image differs from such other images as the lion, and the boar faces here are to the right and left respectively of the main figure. Their position is reversed in other images.

-
1. वैकुण्ठं तु प्रवक्ष्यामि सोऽष्टबाहुर्महाबलः ।
 तादृशसिन्धुर्वक्त्रः कर्तव्यशान्तिमिच्छता ॥
 गदां सङ्गं शरं च ददाणोऽस्य चतुष्टयम् ।
 शंखं खट्वाङ्गं धनुः पद्मं वामे दद्याच्चतुष्टयम् ॥
 अग्रतः पुरुषाकारं नारसिंहं च ददाणो ।
 अपरं स्त्रीमुखाकारं वाराहस्य तथोत्तरम् ॥

Rūpamaṇḍana, III, 52-54.

Also compare, Aparājitaprocchā, Sūtra 219, 25-26. Here the fourth face is called Srīmukha.

2. Vogel J. Ph., Catalogue of Archaeological Museum Mathura, Allahabad, 1910, p. 100.

Almost a similar image of the same date and provenance, is published by Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, which he describes as an important document equally of art and iconography¹. There is an image in the temple of Bajaurāin, Chamba, having four faces, which according to Dr. Goetz, although assigned to a later date, is a Pratihara copy of the original of the 7th century A.D.² A very similar image is in the collection of Haridas swali at Bombay.

In the famous Avantisvāmi temple of Kashmir, on the floor of the courtyard, not far from the central shrine, in the north-west corner, is an image of Vaikunṭha³. The central head wears a three-peaked coronet, necklaces, bracelets, etc. The only garment worn is the dhoti as is the case with all the Vaikunṭha figures. A small sword or dagger is stuck in the belt near the right hip a feature peculiar to the Vaikunṭha images from Kashmir. Between his feet, from the base, rises the goddess Prṭhvī, who is associated with Varāha or even otherwise with Viṣṇu, as his consort. The image has four arms; the upper right and

-
1. Coomaraswamy A.K., Bulletin of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Dec. 1919. No. 104. p. 60ff.
 2. Goetz Hermann, Early Wooden Temples of Chamba, p. 66, footnote 55. /Leiden, 1955,
 3. Daya Rama Sahni, Excavations at Avantipur, ASIAR, 1913-14. p. 44ff. Plate XXVII-b.c.

left hands holding the full-blown lotus and the conch respectively. The lower hands rest on the heads of two caurī-bearers. Shri Sahani observes, "As is customary with these figures, the demon in question has grinning teeth, protruding tusks and eyes, a short chin and terrific eyebrows. His hair is tied up in a big knot."

The fourth face of Vaikunṭha is described by many scholars as 'demonical', however, in the light of the explanation of Kapila given above, is better to call it fierce aspect of Viṣṇu rather than demonical, because there is hardly any reason to connect Viṣṇu, a benign god, with a demon.

Sri Pratapsingh Museum at Srinagar has two beautiful images of Vaikunṭha. One fragment (Museum No. A.C. 21) represents the four-handed Vaikunṭha with the fourth face carved in a low relief at the back¹. Fragment No. A.C. 18 in the same Museum², is another such image.

Closely resembling the image of Avantipur, is the Saho³ image, lying in the shrine opposite the temple of

-
1. Kak R.C., Handbook to the Archaeological Section of Sri Pratapsingh Museum, Srinagar, 1923. p. 48.
 2. 5000 Years Art From India. (Catalogue of the exhibition held at Germany, 1959). p. 151, pl. 188.
 3. Vogel J. Ph., op. cit., p. 248, Pl. XXXIX.

Candraśekh at Saho. It is an inscribed stone statue of the height of $1' 8\frac{1}{2}"$. The god has three hallowed heads. Of the four hands, two rest on the heads of caurī-bearers, one of whom holds a fan instead of the cāmara. One of the right hands holds a lotus while the left one is broken. The goddess Pṛthvī is shown rising from the base. Behind the caurī-bearers stand two other attendants. Brahmā and Śiva are represented at the top on either side of the main figure, while encircling the image are carved the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu.

There are two standing images of Vaikuṇṭha in the Prince of Wales Museum.

One of them is a beautiful stone image, which though partly mutilated, has preserved the graceful bust and the four faces and the minute details of the ornaments. The image has a striking resemblance with an image in Sri Pratapsingh Museum (Museum No. A.C. 18). The front face is human, the right one that of Nṛsimha and the left one that of Varāha (fig. 20). The back face is of fierce-looking Kapila, wearing the jaṭā, indicative of his being a Rṣi, with widely open eyes (fig. 21). The front three faces are adorned with a three-picked coronet. Behind the front three faces are the traces of lotus petals indicating possibly a halo. The image must have been four-handed, holding the usual emblems of Viṣṇu, all of which are broken.

The second figure though smaller than the above-

mentioned image, rivals it in the finish of the modelling and the delicate treatment of ornaments. In most of the iconographical details, it is very similar to the previous one. The four heads of Vaikunṭha image preserved but all the four hands are completely broken, the only garment worn is the dhoti as usual.

The presence of a small dagger attached to the belt on the right side, indicates their Kashmir origin. Very probably, the two images described above are from Avantipur, as they bear striking resemblance to the group of images from that region. On the stylistic grounds they could be assigned to the 9th century A.D.

In the Harihara temple at Ballaur in Basohli, there is an image of Vaikunṭha, preserving three heads and the bust¹. The fragment is very similar in style to the 9th century Vaikunṭha images of Kashmir.

II

Most of the stone images just described are the standing images of Vaikunṭha. There is a very peculiar image of Vaikunṭha in the Prince of Wales Museum, published by

1. Kak R.C., Antiquities of Basohli and Ramnagar.
Indian Art and Letters, Vol. VII. No. 2.
 New Series. p. 75.

Barrett¹, though the description of the image given by him suffers from several inaccuracies. The four-faced haloed image is seated on Garuḍa on a square pedestal with a full-blown lotus which appears like Śrī cakra or Śrī yantra. The small water spout attached to the base is meant to drain the lavation (Abhiṣeka) water. He holds in his lower and upper right hands the lotus and the sword respectively, and in the lower and the upper left hands the conch and the disc, which is partly mutilated. The dagger that is generally stuck in the belt of the Vaikunṭha images, in accordance with the injunction of the Jayākhyā Samhitā² is here placed in the hands of the deity. The fourth face representing Kapila is very fierce looking. Instead of wearing the jaṭā which is generally the case, he wears a mukuta. Garuḍa is also four-handed, two of which hold a pūrṇa ghata and the other two support the feet of Vaikunṭha. There are four female figures two on the either side of the god seated on the serrated leaf-like feathers of Garuḍa. Three similar stylised feathers are joined to

-
1. Douglass Barrett, Bronzes from North Western India and Western Pakistan, Lalit Kalā. No. 11. April 1962. Pl. XXXIII, fig. 32.
 2. The author has referred also to such other images of the same date in the Victoria and Albert Museum. See Pl. XXXII, fig. 32.
 2. Jayākhyā Samhitā, I, 65-73.

the base, just to keep up the balance of the whole figure.

The identification of the four female figures is problematic. This feature is so far not met with in any of the Vaikunṭha images and the emblems held by them are not very clear. The upper figures, may be his consorts, as the emblems in their hands seem to be lotuses. The Vaikunṭha image with his two consorts is described in the Jayākhyā Samhitā where he is supposed to be accompanied by Śrī and Bhūmī, but the other two figures cannot be explained.

A stone slab from Himgiri in the Bhuri Singh Museum¹ (No. A. 35), Chamba, represents a three-faced god seated his mount Garuḍa. The image has four hands, two of which hold a wheel and a conch. The other two hands are placed on the heads of miniature attendants, who hold a flywhisk and a mace.

A mutilated image of three faced Vaikunṭha is preserved in the sanctum of the Lakṣmana temple at Khajuraho², apparently belonging to the middle of the 10th century A.D. The image seems to have had four arms, all of which are broken now.

-
1. Vogel, Catalogue of the Bhuri Singh Museum at Chamba. Calcutta, 1909. p. 7.
 2. Agrawal Urmila, Khajuraho Sculptures and their Significance. p. 44.

The existence of such image in the sanctum of a magnificent temple like the Lakṣmaṇa temple, is sufficient to indicate that the worship of the Vaikunṭha form of Viṣṇu was prevalent in the Chandela country in the 10th century.

The form of the deity, after remaining constant for a long time, was changed and elaborated, in about the eleventh century, resulting in the creation of the new iconographical forms.

III

Vaikunṭha, ~~was~~ so far only occasionally associated with his attendants, is accompanied now, by his consort Lakṣmī, who sits on his left thigh, as in the Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa images. This form is described in the Jayākhyā Samhitā as Lakṣmī and Vaikunṭha.¹ Thus an image of Vaikunṭha in the Bhuri Singh Museum² (No. A.9) found from Devi Kothi at Bera Paragana, shows Vaikunṭha seated on his vehicle with Lakṣmī who is seated on his left knee. He has three faces and seems to have had four hands holding his usual attributes. As the image is mutilated only one hand holding the mace can be seen. The image is interesting as it bears a small inscription at the base, which records that the image

1. Jayākhyā Samhitā, XXXIII, 54-56.

2. Vogel J. Ph., op. cit. p. 3.

was made by the order of Rana Nāga Pāla who lived in the middle of the 12th century A.D. The image is named Nārāyaṇa.

There have been definite attempts at synthesising Vaikuṇṭha with other prevalent forms of Viṣṇu. In the centre of the middle row of the enormous Salahi Fountain slab at Chamba, dated 1170 A.D., the artist has tried to combine the Vaikuṇṭha and the Śeṣasāyī forms of Viṣṇu¹. Viṣṇu is reclining on the Śeṣa, holding his hands in the añjali-mudrā. Viṣṇu here, has three faces, instead of the one normal face, the additional faces being those of Nṛsimha and Varāha. But for this peculiarity, the rest of the features of this image are the same as that of the Śeṣasāyī images. This iconographical form might have been popular in Kashmir and Chamba, as this form is alluded to in the Rājatarāṅgiṇī².

In the Markula Devi temple at Markula, Udaipur, at Lahul at Chamba, the relief on the eastern side of the balcony window, represents the Trivikrama form of Viṣṇu, with a deliberate attempt to synthesise it with the Vaikuṇṭha form. The standing god with left leg extended to reach Brahmā in heaven and with his right leg reaching the nether world, has three faces as in the Vaikuṇṭha form. The relief

-
1. Vogel J. Ph., Antiquities of Chamba State. Part I. p. 219. Pl. XXXI.
 2. Rājatarāṅgiṇī, IV, 508.

is decorated with various incidents in the story of Vāmana.¹

One of the main features in the process of elaborating these images is the multiplication of attributes and hands. The hands multiply from four to eight, twelve, sixteen and even twenty. When these forms were accepted by the orthodox worshippers they were iconographically classified under different heads, according to the number of hands and the order of attributes held by the deity, the difference being only a minor one. We, thus, find some of them described in later Silpaśāstras belonging to the fifteenth century or even later. The dhyānas however do not tally with each other.

An image of Vaikunṭha with eight hands is found from Gujarat.² This unpublished image is lying in the temple of Siddhanātha Mahādeva, at Sandera. It has three faces, on the right side is the face of Nṛsimha and on the left is the face of Varaha. Of the eight hands, the upper right holds the mace and the lower right is in the vyākhyāna-mudrā. The upper left hand holds a staff and the bow. The rest of the hands are broken. The image belongs to the

1. Goetz Hermann, The Early Wooden Temples of Chamba, Pl. XVI.

2. I am thankful to Dr. R.N. Mehta of Baroda for bringing this image to my notice.



9th century A.D. At Khajuraho, on the back inner wall of the Kandāria Mahādeva temple, assigned to the 11th century, there is an image of three-faced Viṣṇu with eight hands, out of which only two holding the disc and the lotus have been survived¹.

The twelve-handed variety is designated Ananta by some of the Silpasastra texts². It is mentioned that in the right hands of the god should be placed the mace, the dagger, the disc, the thunderbolt, the goad, the arrow, and in the left hands the conchshell, the shield, the bow, the lotus, the staff and the noose. He should be seated on Garuḍa and his four faces represent a man, a lion, a woman and a boar.

Another variety of Vaikuṇṭha with sixteen hands called Trailokyamohana also has the four usual heads. The emblems in the right hands are the mace, the disc, the goad, the arrow, the lance, the disc and the varada-mudrā. In the left hands are the club, the noose, the bow, the conchshell, the lotus, the kamandalu, the horn and the natural hands are to be held in the yoga-mudrā. He is seated on his Garuḍa.

The twenty-handed images, with the front faces like

-
1. Agrawal Urmila, op. cit., p. 44.
 2. Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa and Rūpamandana, see adhyāya 5 and 3 respectively for all these forms.
- Also compare Aparājita-prcchā, Sūtra 219.

those of the Ananta form, represent the Viśvarūpa form of Viṣṇu. The right hand holds the banner, the conchshell, the ploughshare, the thunderbolt, the goad, the arrow, the disc, the bijoru (citron fruit), and the last hand should be in the varada-mudrā. In the left hands the deity holds the standard, the staff, the noose, the mace, the bow, the lotus, the horn, the pestle and the rosary. The natural hands are in the yoga-mudrā.

Goetz refers to a twelve-handed figure of Viṣṇu with three faces, lying in the Lakṣanā Devī temple at Brahmor in Chamba¹. Many of the hands are broken but on the basis of the attributes that have survived, it is possible to identify it with the Ananta form of Viṣṇu. It is remarkable that the fourth right and left hands are placed on the attendants.

Images with multiple hands, belonging to the period between the 12th and the 15th century have been found from northern Gujarat, which need not be described here². It

1. Goetz Hermann, op. cit., p. 77.

2. For details see: Sankalia H.D., Rare Figures of Viṣṇu from Gujarat. Journal of the University of Bombay. Vol. VII, No. 4, p. 3-8.

Majmudar M.R., Studies in the Varieties of Viṣṇu Images in Gujarat. Journal of the Gujarat Research Society. Vol. I. No. 4, p. 53.

may only be remarked in passing that the ten-handed variety, found in Gujarat is not described in the texts, and that the Trailokyamohana form must have been worshipped and patronized by the Vaiṣṇavas of Gujarat from the 12th to the 15th century A.D.

IV

A brief reference may also be made here of another unique form of Viṣṇu which evolved side by side with these forms, designated by scholars as Mahā-Viṣṇu, Viśvarūpa, etc. It seems plausible that not satisfied with the four heads of Vaikunṭha image, the sculptor strove to synthesize all the possible concepts and forms of Viṣṇu, to represent him as the centre of the universe. Besides the three heads of Vaikunṭha Caturmūrti there are likewise found images with many heads carved in the round, around the central face. The images are also multi-handed.

A mutilated image in the Mathura Museum is supposed to be that of Viṣṇu Viśvarūpa¹. An image of this type has been found from Kanauj also. The main image is surrounded by several figures like eleven Rudras, the twelve Āditiyas, Balarāma, Indra, Sarasvatī, etc. The nāgas at the bottom flanking or supporting his feet indicate the nether world. The heads

1. Sivarammurti C., Indian Sculpture, Delhi, 1961.
p. 98-99. Pl. 33.

of Nṛsimha, Varāha, the horse and probably the tortoise are attached to the head of Viṣṇu. The main figure is eight-handed holding in his left hands the shield, the disc, the dagger and the conchshell. One of the right hands is broken, two of them hold the sword and the mace and the upper one is in the abhaya-mudrā.

From Baijanath in Kumaon also a magnificent image, very similar in style to that of Kanauj, has been discussed at length by K.P. Nautiyal¹. Two images, described by Dr. U. P. Shah, hailing from Samalaji in Gujarat² are equally interesting. All these images have retained the most peculiar character of the Vaikunṭha image - the lion and the boar face attached to the main human face of the figure.

It is significant that a number of three- or four-faced images have been found from Kashmir and north-western part of India, earlier than the 10th century, indicating the worship of Viṣṇu in the Vaikunṭha form. It seems that the form originated in the Gupta period, and then became the centre of an important cult from the 8th to the 10th century A.D. Installation of such Vaikunṭha images are incidentally

-
1. Nautiyal K.P., "An Interesting Viṣṇu Image from Baijanath", Bulletin of Deccan College Research Institute. Vol. XXII, p. 170ff.
 2. Shah U.P., Sculptures from Samalāji and Rodā, p. 66ff. Pl. 48 and 50.

referred to in the Rājatarāṅgīnī¹, where it is designated Caturātman. The installation of such images is also sometimes mentioned in the inscriptions as the Saho image inscription of Chamba indicates. The Vaikunṭha cult seems to have received the patronage of Avantivarman of Kashmir as many of the Vaikunṭha images are found in the temples built during his reign. It seems that the popularity of Vaikunṭha Caturmūrti in Kashmir is due to the strength of Vaiṣṇavism in Kashmir and adjacent regions. The Rājatarāṅgīnī alludes to kings patronizing various Vaiṣṇavite cults by building the temples of those deities. An image of Viṣṇu Jayasvāmin was consecrated by king Pravarasena II², who lived in the 6th century A.D. King Durlabhasvāmin consecrated the shrine of Viṣṇu³. The illustrious king Lalitāditya was a staunch worshipper of Viṣṇu. Thus Viṣṇu cult which enjoined the worship of his various incarnations must have been very popular. Among the incarnations of Viṣṇu, Nṛsimha and Varāha acquired special importance. Installation of the Nṛsimha images is referred to in the Rājatarāṅgīnī⁴. Grants were also dedicated in honour of Nṛsimha as testified by the Yugakāra copper plate grant from Chamba⁵. The temple dedicated to Nṛsimha is referred to in the Vamsāvalī of the

1. Rājatarāṅgīnī, V, 25.

2. Ibid., III, 350-51.

3. Ibid., IV, 6.

4. Ibid., IV, 186.

5. Vogel J. Ph., Antiquities of Chamba State. Part I. p. 100.

Kashmirian kings, as mentioned above. The cult of Varāha was also patronized by the kings of north-western India. Installation of a magnificent Varāha image is alluded to in the Rājatarāṅgiṇī¹. The great king Mihira Bhoja had even issued the Ādi Varāha coins². Varāhakṣetra, a sacred place at Varāhamūla, mentioned in the Rājatarāṅgiṇī³, also shows that Varāha was one of the most favourite deities of that period.

It is noteworthy that the back face of the Vaikunṭha Caturmūrti - the Kapila face, is carved in the images in ~~and~~ Kashmir, with the only exception of an image from Varanasi⁴. That the concept of Kapila is emphasized in the Caturmūrti at Kashmir is also apparent in the texts of Kashmirian origin such as the Viṣṇudharmottaram⁵ and the Jayākhyā Samhitā⁶. It seems possible that the conception of the fierce countenance of Kapila was a local or regional trait which did not go beyond Kashmir and the adjacent regions. The fact that Kapila must have acquired an important position in north-western India is also supported by the legend that the Kapilāśrama - a sacred place named after the great

-
1. Rājatarāṅgiṇī, IV, 197.
 2. Cunningham, Coins of Mediaeval India, London, 1894. p. 49.
 3. Rājatarāṅgiṇī, VI, 186, 206, etc.
 4. Bhattacharya, Indian Images, p. 8. Pl. IV.
 5. Buhler G., Indian Antiquary, Vol. XIX, 1890, p. 383.
 6. Schrader, Introduction to the Pāñcarātra and Ahirbudhnyā Samhitā, Madras, 1916. p. 18ff.

episode of the sage Kapila, described above existed near the foothill of the Himalayas.¹

Taking into consideration all these points one may suggest that the Vaikunṭha form of Viṣṇu probably originated in Kashmir. It may also be pointed out that Kashmir was also the place of the origin of the Pāñcarātra theory and the vyūha concept², which prepared a solid base for the symbolism of the Vaikunṭha Caturmūrti. Though the form must also have existed in the plains for the earliest known images of Vaikunṭha hail from Mathura, a great centre of art and religion in the Gupta period, where possibly new iconographic forms evolved.

The consort of Vaikunṭha does not seem to have acquired much importance. Of all the Pāñcarātra texts only Jayākhyā Samhitā enjoins her worship³. An image found from Bijolya represents the consort of Vaikunṭha⁴. She is represented like Vaikunṭha with three faces, but the front face, instead of being human, is that of a horse, indicating the Hayagrīva form of Viṣṇu. It is merely due to the influence of Hayagrīva worship in Rajasthan from where this image is found.⁵

-
1. Wilson H.H., Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Calcutta, 1961. p. 302, footnote No. 4.
 2. Schrader, op. cit., p. 16.
 3. Jayākhyā Samhitā, VI, 77.
 4. Banerji Adris, Interesting Images from South East Rajasthan, Lalit Kalā No. 12. Pl. VIII.
 5. For further details see Desai Kalpana, Consort of Vaikunṭha, Lalit Kalā No. 13.



COMPOSITE IMAGES

The evolution of the composite images is rooted in the tendency of the Hindus in mediaeval India to revere all the gods as of equal importance. The theory of Henotheism propounded by Max Müller explains that in the hymns of the Rig-veda different gods are considered to be the highest gods on different occasions. In the Mahābhārata also sometimes Viṣṇu is praised as the Highest God and sometimes Rudra or Śiva. It is this spirit of tolerance which considers all the gods as of equal rank that must have inspired the concept of a composite figure, where the gods are not only placed on an equal footing but are also synthesized into one.

At the close of the formative period of Brahmanism, the two great cults that evolved and expanded were Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, with Viṣṇu and Śiva or Rudra as their godheads. Hence, the earliest synthesis of religions that we come across is between these two cults, reflected in the composition of the two godheads.

The composite form of the two gods was already known as early as the time of the Mahābhārata (if the relevant portion is genuine). Arjuna after completing his course of penances, addresses a hymn to Śiva where he also

mentions his composite form with Hari as Harirudra¹.
Sculptural evidence also justifies that the Harihara
form was worshipped as early as the Kushana period.

I

Very few texts on iconography and religion describe
the Harihara image. A complete description of Harihara
is however found in the Matsya Purāna². "In the image
the left side is occupied by Mādhava (Viṣṇu) and the
right side by Śiva. Both the arms of Kṛṣṇa are adorned
with diamond bracelets and he holds the conchshell and
disc or mace, wears a yellow garment and is fully orna-

1. Mahābhārata, III, 40, 57.

2. वामार्धं माधवं विधाद् दक्षिणो शूलपाणिनम् ।
बाहुद्वयञ्च कृष्णस्य मणिकैयूरभूषितम् ॥
शंसचक्रधरं शान्तमारक्तांगुलिविभ्रमम् ।
चक्रस्थाने गदां वापि पाणौदधाद् गदामृतः ॥
शंसञ्चैवैतरे दधात्कट्यर्धः भूषणाज्ज्वलम् ।
पीतवस्त्रपरिधानं चरणं मणिभूषितम् ॥
भुजंग हारवलयं वरदं दक्षिणं करम् ॥
द्वितीयञ्चापि कुर्वीत त्रिशूलवरधारिणम् ॥
व्यालीपवीत संयुक्तं कट्यर्धं कृत्तिवाससम् ।
मणिरत्नैश्च संयुक्तं पादं नागविभूषितम् ॥
शिवनारायणस्यैव कल्पयेद्भूपुत्रतमम् ॥

mented. The right half of the head wears jatāmukuta and is adorned by the crescent. He wears a serpent bracelet on his right arm. One of the right hands is held in the varada-mudrā and the other holds a trident. His Yajñopavīta consists of serpents and his lower garment is made up of skin.

The Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa also gives almost the same description of the Śiva-Nārāyaṇa image¹. It is surprising that it describes separately the Harihara image which does not differ much from the Śiva-Nārāyaṇa image.

The right half of the image is Śiva, fair in colour. One of the hands is in the varada-mudrā and the other holds a trident. The left side represents Hṛṣīkeśa, blue in colour, holding the cakra and the padma in his hands. Nandi, the mount of Śiva is to be carved on the right side and Garuḍa, the mount of Viṣṇu is to be carved on the left. Besides these the image of Kṛṣṇa-Saṅkara is also thought of in the same text but iconographically, there is no difference excepting a rosary instead of the

1. Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa, VI, 35-41.

2.

कार्यो हरिहरश्चापि (स्यापि?) दक्षिणार्धे सदाशिवः ।

वामार्धे च हृषीकेशः श्वेतनीलाकृतिः क्रमात् ॥

वरं त्रिशूलं चक्राब्जधारिणो बाहवः क्रमात् ।

दक्षिणो वृषभः पार्श्वे वामे विहगुरुदिति ॥

Ibid., VI, 57-57.

varada-mudrā in one of the hands of Śiva¹.

The earliest images of Harihara known so far, could be traced back as early as the Kushana period. Two heads have been discovered from the Girdharpur Tila near Mathura, now in the collection of the Mathura Museum (No. 1333 and 1336). The upper portion of the heads is divided into two halves. The jatāmukuta on the right side represents Śiva, while the mukuta on the left represents Viṣṇu².

One of the early images of Harihara is preserved in the collection of the Allahabad Museum, on a square stone (No. 292) depicting Varāha, Viṣṇu, Vāmana and Harihara on its four sides. Though the image is worn out there are clear traces of the jatābhāra and the kau-pīna of Śiva on the right and the mukuta and the pītāmbara of Viṣṇu on the left, indicating it to be a Harihara image. The emblems held by them are not very clear but it seems that Śiva held a trident and his other hand was in the abhaya or varada-mudrā. Viṣṇu perhaps held the disc and the conchshell or mace in his hands. Below on

1. Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa, VI, 33,34.

2. Diskalkar D.B., Some Brahmanical Sculptures in the Mathura Museum, JUPHS, Vol. V Part I. Jan. 1932. p. 44. pl. 18.

the right side, trīśūla is represented in its personified form and on the left is cakra also as an āyudha puruṣa. The image belongs to the 5th century A.D.

Another much better specimen of Gupta art is in the Patna Museum. As usual, the right side represents Hara and the left Hari. Śiva holds a trident and a rosary. The end of the trident rests on the head of a squatting figure evidently representing the Trīśūla-Puruṣa. Viṣṇu holds the conchshell in his lower right hand and the upper hand rests on the head of a figure who in all probability is Cakra-Puruṣa (fig. 22).

The mediaeval period has produced some very fine images of Harihara. A 9th century panel carved on both sides, represents Viṣṇu of the Trivikrama kind on one and Harihara on the other. The right hands hold a trident and the rosary and the left holds the disc and the mace. The trident and mace are represented in their personified forms also. There are two other attendant figures, probably representing devotees. On the pedestal appear Nandī and Garuḍa.

An elegant image of Harihara belonging to 9th century, is in the private collection of the Mahant of Bodh Gaya. All the iconographical features of Śiva and Viṣṇu are there in minutest detail. Below the jaṭā near the right ear is a snake with its tail curved into a circle, the bracelet has a human skull in the middle and

the loin cloth is made of skin. The upper right hand holds a trident and a rosary and is in the varada-mudrā. On the left side the head wears ~~at~~ a kirita mukuta the vanamālā hangs down the shoulders and pītāmbara serves as the lower garment. The upper hand holds the disc and the lower hand holds the conchshell. There are two small figures flanking the main image who are either attendants or the āyudha puruṣas. On the pedestal appears Nandī to the right of the lotus supporting the main image, and Garuḍa in human form is to the left. (fig. 23).

The State Museum, Lucknow, has a similar image datable to the ninth century. Iconographically, however, it is not of much interest. Śiva on the right holds trident and a rosary in the hands, head in abhaya-mudrā instead of the varada-mudrā as in the images described above. Viṣṇu on the left holds the disc and the conchshell. The distinguishing marks of Śiva and Viṣṇu appear, as also the Nandī and Garuḍa, near the feet. Two āyudha-puruṣas are also represented as usual.

Similar specimens from eastern India may be referred to here in brief. A much mutilated Harihara datable to the 9th century is found from Burdwan and is preserved in the collection of the Asutosh Museum. A colossal image of the 11th century is lying in the collection of the Indian Museum (No. A 24125).

No early image of Harihara has come to light from western India so far. On the eastern wall of the Harihara

temple II at Osia, near Jodhpur, there is an image of Harihara holding trident in one of the right hands and the other is posed in the abhaya-mudrā and is having the disc and the conchshell in the left hands. Besides the jaṭāmukuta, the third eye appears on the forehead. The kaupīna and the pītāmbara are worn on the waist as usual. A long garland reaching upto the knees represents vanamālā on the left side and skull garland on the right. The Trisūla Puruṣa and Nandi overhead indicate the presence of Śiva and Śankha Puruṣa that of Viṣṇu. Garuḍa is conspicuous by its absence¹.

An almost identical image datable to the same period has come to light from Rodā². Though the image is much mutilated it has retained some characteristic features of Harihara. The upper right hand holds the trident and the lower right is probably in the varada-mudrā. The upper left hand holds the disc and the lower one is akimbo. There are two attendant figures flanking the main image. No other accessory figure or even their mounts are visible.

It is evident from the descriptions of several images of Harihara from northern India that the image did not undergo much evolution from the iconographical point of view. The emblems held by them as well as the position of Śiva and

-
1. Jayakar Pupul, Osian. Marg. XII No. I, December '58. Pl. X
 2. Shah U.P., Sculptures from Śāmalāji and Rodā, Pl. 112.

Viṣṇu remained unchanged. In the later period with the growing tendency at elaboration, some further details such as the third eye of Śiva, the vanamālā and muṇḍamālā and also their respective vehicles were added.

Harihara seems to have been favoured more in U.P. and eastern India judging from the number of images that have been found from those parts.

It is doubtful whether this attempt to synthesise these two prominent religions resulted into a new cult. The known images of Harihara do not seem to have been worshipped. Excepting the Harihara temple at Osia there is hardly any reference to a shrine installed in his name¹. Still, the existence of Harihara images almost everywhere in northern India suggests that there must have been people who adored this composite form in a spirit of tolerance and syncretism.

II

Sometimes Viṣṇu is joined with Sūrya in the place of Śiva. Texts on iconography do not refer to this Sūrya-Nārāyaṇa image, but a six-handed figure in the Jhalawar Museum shows the combination of the two. Four of the hands hold the usual emblems of Viṣṇu, while the other two hands

1. Probably a Harihara temple existed at Rodā also.

See, Shah U.P., op. cit. p. 112.

hold lotuses indicating Sūrya, who also wears full boots. A very peculiar feature of the image is the snakehood around the head, which signifies Viṣṇu accompanied by Śeṣa.

Later on an attempt was made to synthesise the Hindu Trinity into one image. The deity known as Harihara-pitāmaha has four faces and six hands, holding the rosary, the trident and the mace in the right hands and the kaman-dalu, the khatvāṅga and the disc in the left hands¹.

A six-handed composite image has come to light from Unza in Saurashtra from the wall of a pond. The three-faced god is seated on Garuḍa, indicating Viṣṇu to be the main deity. He holds in his right hands a disc, arkamandalu, and a rosary and in his left hands he holds the conchshell, the serpent and the trident².

Cousens has published a similar image from Than in Muni Bava's temple³. The central figure seems to be that

1.

एकपीठ समारूढं तनुत्रयनिवासिनम् ।
षड्भुजञ्च चतुर्वक्त्रं सर्वलक्षणसंयुतम् ॥
अक्षसूत्रं त्रिशूलञ्च गदाचैव तु दक्षिणे ।
कमण्डलुञ्च सट्वाङ्गं चक्रं वामभुजे तथा ॥

Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa, VI, 42-43.

2. Dave K.B., Gujarātnu Mūrtividhāna, p. 314.

3. Cousens, Somanath...Pls. LIII and LXVII.

of Brahmā as attested by the rosary and the kamandalu held in the main two hands.

At times Sūrya is also blended with this Trimūrti¹, thus combining all the prominent contemporary cults except the Sākta. The image variously known as Hari-harahiranyagarbha or Sūryahariharapitāmaha displays all the iconographic characteristics of Sūrya, Viṣṇu, Śiva and Brahmā. According to the Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa² the image combining the four gods into one, should have four faces and eight hands. Sūrya, indicated by the front face, should hold a lotus in either hand. Rudra on the right side should hold the khatvāṅga and the trident, Brahmā on the back should hold a rosary and the ka-mandalu, and Viṣṇu on the left should hold the conchshell and the disc. The Aparājitapṛcchā³ also describes the image in the same manner.

1. Dr. Sankalia calls it Trimurti. See his Archaeology of Gujarat. p. 163.

2.

चतुर्वक्त्रमष्टबाहुं चतुष्पैकनिवासिनम् ।

कद्वामुत्तगतः कार्यः पद्महस्तो दिवाकरः ॥

सट्वाङ्गत्रिशूलहस्तो रद्वोददिणतः शुभः ।

कमण्डलुः चाक्षसूत्रमपरस्थः पितामहः ॥

शंखचक्रधरो हरिवामिचैव तु संस्थितः ।

Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa, VI, 44-46.

3. Aparājitapṛcchā, 213, 32-34.

The Sikar Museum has a three-faced standing image. The four pairs of hands signify the four deities. The lower most pair holds rosary and is in varada-mudrā to the right and the kamandalu to the left. The second pair holds a lotus in each hand, the symbol of Śiva. The third pair of hands for Viṣṇu holds the disc and the conchshell and the uppermost with trident and the snake signifies Śiva. Besides these, the goose and the horse on the left side of the pedestal and the Nandi and Garuḍa on the right side indicate the presence of the four deities¹.

A fine specimen of the same type of composite image has come to light from the Udayeśvara temple, at Udaipur². It is a standing eight-handed image, three of whose hands are already mutilated. The hands on the right side hold the trident, the lotus, the conchshell, and the rosary, one of them is in varada-mudrā. On the left only the disc is preserved. The principal deity in this image is Sūrya, as described by the texts.

Similar images Hariharahiraṇyagarbha may also be seen in the Khajuraho group of temples.

The Lakṣmaṇa temple has such an image in the panel of a small shrine situated to its south-east. It is a

1. Agrawal R.C., Sikar. Marg, Vol. XII, March, 1959.

Pl. 71. (D.G.A. Neg. No.378/42-43).

2. Annual Administrative Report of the Arch. Dept., Gwalior State, for the year 1933-34. Pl. XII.

colossal image, 9 ft. in height, having three faces and eight hands. The full boots and the lotus in either hand in front Sūrya to be the main deity in the composition. The three extra hands on the right holding the trident, the rosary, the third being in varāda-mudrā, the left hand holds the snake, the conchshell and the kamandalu. The emblems of Viṣṇu here are varada-mudrā and the conchshell instead of the disc and the conchshell. A goddess is seen in front of the main image as the dvārapālas flank the main image¹.

On the Sikhara of the Viśvanātha temple also is preserved a similar three-faced image, wearing an armour, boots and ornaments. The main deity is again Surya as in the image described above, as the main hands are holding the lotuses. The rest of the right hands hold the rosary, the trident and the conchshell whereas the left hands hold the kamandalu, the snake and the discus. The goddess, the dvārapālas and the other accessory figures are also present.

The Javari and the Chaitragupta temples also have images of the same kind but are slightly mutilated.

Seated images of Hariharahiranyagarbha are also known.

1. Awasthi Ramashraya, Khājūrāho kī Harihara-Hiranyagarbha Pratimāyen. JUPHS. Vol. X. Part II. Pl. X.

The Jhalawar Museum has a fine composite seated image. The three-faced and eight-handed composite deity is mounted on Garuḍa, indicating that the main god here is Viṣṇu. The Hamsa and Nandī are carved below the Garuḍa. Iconography of the image is the same as in the standing images. The emblems of the lowermost pair of hands are indicative of Brahmā but the right hand is shown in abhaya-mudrā, instead of holding the rosary. The second pair holding a lotus in either hand and the boots indicate Sūrya, the third pair of Viṣṇu's hands is mutilated, while the right hand in the fourth pair holds the trident of Śiva, and the left one is broken (unpublished).

On the west face of the Limboji Mātā temple at Delmal, a panel contains a similar image as the one described above. The image wearing an armour and boots is seated on Garuḍa, the vāhana of Viṣṇu, flanked by the other vāhanas of Śiva and Brahmā. The image does not have anything noteworthy from the iconographical point of view¹. As regards the main deity of the composition, Dr. Sankalia believes that here Sūrya is emphasised more² because of the main hands holding the lotuses, but a big figure of Garuḍa supporting the main image would indicate an emphasis on Viṣṇu also as in the image in the Jhalawar Museum.

-
1. Burgess and Cousens, Archaeological Antiquities of Northern Gujarat. p. 88. Pl. LXIX, LXXI 7.
 2. Sankalia H.D., op. cit. p. 164.

A niche of the Pratapēśvara temple at Khajuraho contains an image in padmāsana with three faces and eight hands. The main head wears a kirita and the side ones are adorned with jatās. His lotuses held in either hand in front are broken. The remaining three right hands hold a rosary, trident and the discus and the left ones hold the kamandalu, the snake and the conchshell. Below the padmāsana on the pedestal are represented seven horses carrying Sūrya¹. The Dulādeva temple also contains a similar image.

It is clear from the images of Hariharapitāmaha belonging to the 11th-12th century A.D., described above that iconographically all of them are almost identical, deviating only to a small extent from the injunction of the Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa. According to the text, Śiva and Viṣṇu are to be represented on the right and the left of the image respectively, placing the emblems of Śiva in the two right hands and the emblems of Viṣṇu in the left hands, which shows that the Harharahiranyagarbha image is evolved from the Harihara image. The sculptors, however, have tried to simplify it and instead, they have allotted each pair of hands to each god. It is noteworthy that the main deity is always Sūrya or sometimes Viṣṇu, but never Śiva or Brahmā.

1. Awasthi Ramashraya, op. cit. Pl. XI.

The number of images found in Gujarat, Rajasthan and central India, as against the absence of this type in the other parts of northern India, is a proof of the regional bias of these composite images in the late mediaeval period. This view is further supported by the fact that the first reference to these composite images is found in the Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa, a text written in Rajasthan.

A curious image of Harihara flanked by Sūrya and Buddha was found in Bihar, ^{and} is now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. The central figure represents Śiva on the right side and Viṣṇu on the left. This is supported by the trident and rosary in the right hands and conch-shell and disc in the left hands, as also by Nandī and Garuḍa appearing on the pedestal. Both the gods are accompanied by their consorts, Pārvatī and Lakṣmī. On the extreme right of the panel is the standing figure of Buddha in abhaya-mudrā with two chaityas carved above his head. In the corresponding position to the left is Sūrya with a lotus in either hand. He is mounted on a chariot driven by seven horses, the figure of Aruṇa the charioteer is also recognizable between the legs of the central figure. The sculpture is not a synthesis of four deities in a single composition but at the same time the

1. Majumdar N.G., ASIAR. 1930-34. Part II. p. 256-57.
Pl. XXVII d.

appearance of the images of Sūrya and the Buddha on the same panel suggests a spirit of synthesis. Instead of occupying a part in the composite Harihara image, the Buddha and Sūrya are shown to be accompanying it. It is noteworthy that one of the deities in that synthesis is the Buddha in the place of Brahmā, owing to the predominance of Buddhism in Bengal and Bihar, in the mediaeval period. The image may be dated to the 13th century A.D.

In the 14th-15th century, people united several forms of Viṣṇu into one. For instance, two images in the Bhubaneswara museum depicted the blending of Kṛṣṇa Venugopāla, Govardhanadhārī and Viṣṇu. The small figure of Śeṣaśāyī is carved near the feet. A similar image has come to light from Gujarat also, but as these images belong to a very late period they do not fall within the scope of the present thesis.

The images of Hariharahiranyagarbha are generally carved on the niches of temples. No shrine exclusively devoted to the god is known so far, but at the same time, it is certain that the form was acknowledged and greatly revered in western and central India.

III

In the 9th-10th century, Viṣṇuism shows a clear impact of Buddhism, especially in eastern India. Several images

of Viṣṇu, standing under the snakehood, at times with a figure of Dhyānī Buddha on it, have come to light from east part of India.

An image of Viṣṇu standing under the snake hood found from Sunderban, is in the collection of the Asutosh Museum, designated as Viṣṇu-lokeśvara. This image datable to the 9th century has his lower right hand in the abhaya-mudrā his upper right hand holds the disc, upper left holds the lotus and the lower left holds the conch. It is flanked by Śrī and Bhūmidevī.

A similar image from Midnapur is in the collection of the same Museum. The iconography is more detailed and stylised. The mace and the disc held in the two upper hands are placed on the lotuses held by Viṣṇu. The mace is horizontally placed on the lotus. The lower two hands hold the lotus and the conch. Śrīdevī and Bhūmidevī flank the main figure. Near the goddesses are seen seated attendants. In the middle of the panel, on the either side are seen Śiva and Lakṣmī to the right and the left respectively. On the top of the snake hood is a figure of a Dhyānī Buddha, markedly showing Buddhist influence on the Vaiṣṇavism. Buddhism seems to have superseded Vaiṣṇavism and hence Viṣṇu is being subordinated to Buddha. Below on the pedestal is carved the figure of the dancing Śiva. (fig. 24)

There are a couple of other such images also found from eastern India. A bronze image of great iconographic significance is preserved in the collection of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad. The head of the image is canopied by a seven hooded serpent, showing a human face on each of them as the serpent is represented in its personified form, each of the personified head is again canopied by three serpent hoods. The personified nāgas are holding some indistinct object in their hands. The main image carved in the dviḥhaṅga posture, is six-handed. The lowest right hand is in the abhaya-mudrā, the middle one holds the disc and the upper right holds a cornucopia surmounted by a makara. The lowest left hand holds possibly the kamala-nāla on which Lakṣmī is seated with folded hands. R. D. Banerjee identifies it as Garuḍa dhvaja, but as the figure on it is a female figure, its identification as Lakṣmī on the lotus is more probable.¹ A parallel device of carving Lakṣmī as a part of Viṣṇu image is seen in an image found from Bivli in Konkan, where Viṣṇu holds Lakṣmī in a lotus flower held by Viṣṇu.² The image is flanked by Śankha Puruṣa and Cakra Puruṣa holding their emblems. A very rare feature about this

1. Banerji R.D., Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture, p. 96. Pl. XXXVIII b.

2. ^{Sh}Dixit M. G., Some Mediaeval Sculptures from the Konkan. Bulletin of the PWM of Western India. No. 9 p. 39. Pl. 38.

image is the presence of the cornucopia surmounted by a makara. The makara and the cornucopia are considered to be the nidhis and are held by the deities bestowing prosperity to their devotees. The goddess Śrī or Lakṣmī is associated with the horn of plenty.¹ Gaṇapati, who fulfils the desires of his devotees is also associated with the horn as evidenced by both sculptural and textual evidences.² The associations of Śṛṅga, a symbol of fertility and prosperity, with Viṣṇu is appropriate in the same connection. A form of Mahāviṣṇu, designated as Trailokyamohana, is supposed to hold a cornucopia in his hands.³ (fig. 25)

Two images of similar iconography are known from Ghiyasabad and Sonarang. In the image of Sonarang⁴ the serpent is not personified and besides there is an image of the Dhyānī Buddha Amitābha on the top of the hood as also in the image preserved in the Asutosh Museum described above. The image from Ghiyasabad is mutilated. The only remarkable feature in this image is that the emblems are placed on the lotuses held by Viṣṇu, instead of holding them directly.

-
1. Moti Chandra, Nidhiśṛṅga - A Study in Symbolism. Bulletin of the PWM of Western India, No. 9. p. 24ff.
 2. Ibid., p. 28-29.
 3. Aparajitaprecchā, 219, 40.
 4. Banerji R.D., op.cit. Pl. XXXIII d.

All these images reveal a great affinity to the Buddhist images. In fact the presence of a dhyānī Buddha on the top of the hood is suggestive of a clear synthesis of Viṣṇu with Lokanātha of the Mahāyāna pantheon. The prominence of Buddhism in Bengal during the Pala rule has tried to subdue other orthodox sects prevalent at that time. Hence, we find in these specimens a synthesis of the two religions which do not seem to have prevailed outside eastern India. A number of Brahmanic deities are adopted and synthesised in later Buddhism as indicated by a number of iconographic forms like Hariharivāhana Lokeśvara, Viṣṇucakra Lokeśvara, etc.

IV

Another composite form that evolved in the mediaeval period is that of Yoganārāyaṇa or Yogesvara Viṣṇu. The form seems to be a composite form of Buddha and Viṣṇu.

Yogesvara Viṣṇu represents him as the yogī and hence the most important feature of the image is the padmāsana and the dhyāna-mudrā. Viṣṇu is seated in the dhyāna-mudrā or meditation as the dhyānī Buddha does, but the only difference is in the number of hands. Viṣṇu even in his dhyānī form, is endowed with four hands, the lower two in the dhyāna-mudrā and the upper two holding two emblems of Viṣṇu. He is also adorned with ornaments and the vanamālā, quite unlike a dhyānī Buddha. The description of Yogesvara

Viṣṇu is found only in the Caturvargacintāmaṇi¹.

The earliest image of Yoganārāyaṇa that we have known is from the Rājiva Locana temple at Rajim. Viṣṇu is seated on the lotus in yogāsana with two of his hands in the yoga-mudrā. The upper two hands hold the disc and the conch. This haloed image is a beautiful example of the 7th century².

An image of Yoganārāyaṇa is in the collection of the Jodhpur Museum³. The profusely ornamented image shows Viṣṇu in the dhyāna-mudrā, seated on a lotus. The lotus stalk is held by a nāga couple. Viṣṇu holds in his upper two hands the vanamālā.

A very similar, but slightly mutilated image has come to light from Devangana near Abu. Here also, Viṣṇu is in the dhyāna-mudrā, seated on a lotus, with its stalk flanked by the nāgas.

It may be noted here in brief that this motif of the lotus and the nāgas under it, is a typically Buddhist feature, clearly visible in the Buddha images at Kanheri and other caves.

1. Caturvargacintāmaṇi, II, 114.

2. Dikṣit M. G., Sirpur and Rajim Temples. p. 73.

3. Anand Mulk Raj, Remnants shored against the Ruins
Marg, No. XII. P. 22. fig. 20.

The image in the Mathura Museum is published by R.C. Agrawal. Viṣṇu is seated on a pedestal having a lotus carved on it and there is conch below the pedestal. The upper two hands of the god hold the mace and the disc. A similar image is also in the Chattarpur Museum. The image is partly mutilated, but it seems that it was only two-handed, both of them in the dhyāna-mudrā.

A small image of Yoganārāyaṇa is in the collection of the Bharat Kala Bhavan. It is very similar to the image from Mathura.

This is the common type of Yoganārāyaṇa image. The image from Khajuraho is slightly different as it shows Viṣṇu seated in the padmāsana, but not in the dhyāna-mudrā. The upper two hands hold the mace and the disc, the lower right is held up to place the first finger on the lips and the lower left seems to be mutilated. It represents Viṣṇu in Maunavrata. He is seated on a lotus as usual, with the nāgas seated under it¹.

All these images are datable to the period between the 10th and 12th century and are four-handed.

An image from Vasisth āśrama, Abu, is interesting because it shows Viṣṇu with six or probably eight hands. All the hands are broken and hence nothing can be said

1. Agrawal Urmila, Khajuraho Sculptures and their Significance, Pl. 23.

about the emblems held by them. The nāga couples and the āyudha-purusas are flanking the lotus stalk. This is the only multi-handed variety of this form found so far, but it leaves the possibility of the existence of such images. The image is datable to the 9th century A.D.

MATSYA AND KŪRMA

Matsya and the Kūrma, the first two of the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu are minor ones compared to his other avatāras. They are neither often adored and exalted in the religious texts nor usually represented individually in stone and worshipped by the people. However, in no way does this undermine their importance, nor does it imply a mere accidental connection with Viṣṇu. The fish and the tortoise forms of Viṣṇu represent an important aspect of that great god, and therefore, due importance must be given to their symbolic significance.

MATSYA: It is really a problem how an insignificant fish came to play a part in the avatāra cycle of a great god like Viṣṇu. It does not figure in the Vedic mythology. From out of the way references to the fish that we find in the later literature, it is possible to surmise that the fish was considered a symbol of fertility. For instance, the sacrificial offering of a fish-otter to Apām Napāt prescribed in the Kausika Sūtra¹ can be attributed to the idea of attaining the

1. Kausika Sūtra, 127, 10, 11.

the water of life¹.

There is an interesting story concerning the birth of Matsya in the Brhaddevatā². The two Ādityas viz., Mitra and Varuṇa happened to see that the nymph Urvaśī. On seeing her their semen was effused and fell into a jar, into the water and on the ground. As a result the sage Vaśiṣṭha was born on the earth, Agatsya from the jar, and the Matsya "of Great Brilliance" in the water. This Matsya of great brilliance is a synonym for the waters and more distinctly stands for the waters of life. It symbolizes the power of fertility, a fact which led to the identification of the fish and Viṣṇu, himself closely connected with the waters and creation in his Nārāyaṇa and several other forms³.

The main or the only function of the Fish as an incarnation of Viṣṇu was to save Manu from the Great Flood and help him to assume the role of a creator. Some scholars⁴ try to trace the antiquity of the flood legend to the

1. Keith A.B., The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and the Upanishads. London, 1925. p. 279.

2.

बहुधा पतिते शुद्धे कलशेऽथ जले स्थले ।

स्थले वसिष्ठस्तु मुनिः सम्भूत कणिसत्तमः ॥

कुम्भेत्वगतस्यः सम्भूतो जले मत्स्यो महाधुतिः ।

Brhaddevatā, V, 151-152.

3. Gonda, Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism, pp. 11-20.

4. Coomaraswamy A.K., Yakshas. Washington, 1928. p. 53.

Atharva Veda XIX, 39, 8., but their interpretation being doubtful can not be relied upon. The legend is found in its fully developed form in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa¹, which runs as follows:

One morning, while Manu was washing his hands with the water specially brought for him, a small fish came into his hands. It began to speak and requested Manu to rear it up and promised him to save his life from an all destroying flood. Thereupon, Manu inquired how to rear him up. It said: "Thou wilt first keep me in a jar. When I outgrow that, thou wilt take me into a pit dug by you, when I outgrow that thou wilt take down to the sea, for then I shall be beyond destruction." Soon it grew into a big fish (jhaṣa). It asked Manu to prepare a ship and board it when the flood would come. In the same year which the fish had indicated to him, he prepared a ship and entered it. The fish swam upto him and he tied the ship's rope to the horn of the fish. Thus they crossed swiftly upto "yonder northern mountain".

In the Mahābhārata also we find the same legend wherein the fish is described as śṛṅgi, having a horn². Here he is

1. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, I, 8, 1-9.

2. आगमिष्याम्यहं शृंगी विज्ञयस्तेन तापस ।

Mahābhārata, III, 185, 31.

considered to be a form of Prajāpati rather than of Viṣṇu¹.

The symbolic significance of the fish in an early period is attested by a couple of finds from Sarnath and Mathura. A pillar from Sarnath contains a fish-god with two tails. It is a human form having a fish for the lower part of its body.² Another fish-god is engraved on the belt of a human figure from Mathura³. The significance of these fish-gods is not yet explained but it definitely indicates that the symbolism of fish as the water of life and creation had been realized, though its relation to Viṣṇu is not yet clear.

The image of the fish incarnation of Viṣṇu is to be made in the form of a fish with a horn according to the Viṣṇudharmottaram⁴. Not many images of the fish incarnation have been found, and those that are available belong to the post-Gupta period.

-
1. अहं प्रजापतिर्ब्रह्मा मत्परं नाधिगम्यते ।
मत्स्यरूपेण यूयं च मयास्मान्मोदिता मयात् ॥

Mahābhārata, III, 185, 48.

2. Marshall and Konow, Excavations at Sarnath. ASIAR, 1907-08. p. 70. pl. XX.
3. Vogel J. Ph., Explorations at Mathura. ASIAR, 1911-12. p. 125.

4. ऋणीमत्स्यस्तु कर्तव्यो देवदेवो जनार्दनः ।

Viṣṇudharmottaram, 85, 59.

An uncommon image of Matsya from Bajrayogini has been published by R.D. Banerjee¹. The bust of the four armed Viṣṇu issues out of the neck of the fish enthroned on a lotus. The god holds the mace and the conch in his upper and the lower left hands, the disc in his upper right hand, while the mutilated lower right hand might be holding the lotus. The main figure is flanked by Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī, placed on two small lotuses springing from the main lotus stalk. On the pedestal is a small figure of Garuḍa and to the left and right stand the devotees.

Another such image is referred to by the same author, preserved in the palace of a Thakur at Sohagpur in Madhya Pradesh².

An interesting representation of the Matsyāvatāra is on a panel of the left inner pradakṣiṇāpatha of the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho. The god Viṣṇu is seated in the yog-āsaṇa on a fish with the two lower hands in the dhyāna-mudrā, the upper two hands hold the mace and the disc. On either side of the deity are seen figures with folded hands, who may be identified as the Rsis accompanied by Manu³.

1. Banerjee R.D., ASIAR, 1924-25. p. 154. Pl. XL.b.

2. Ibid., p. 155.

3. Agrawal Urmila, Khajuraho Sculptures and their Significance, p. 30. Pl. 10.

The fish incarnation, executed as half-man and half-fish has been referred to by R.C. Kak¹. This image hailing from Ramnagar in Jammu, is of crude workmanship and not of much importance. A small panel on the top row of the eastern wall of the Gauri temple at Bhubaneswar contains a similar image of the Matsyāvatāra. The four-handed image of Viṣṇu issues from the neck of a fish, holding his usual emblems. The image is much later in date, belonging to about the 13th century.

The Matsyāvatāra, depicted as a simple fish on the full-blown lotus is known from Garhwa in Allahabad district². Behind the fish are seen four standing figures with folded hands. The identification of these four figures is rather difficult. If they are taken to be the Ṛṣis, the number does not agree with the number given in the Sanskrit texts, where Manu is said to be accompanied by seven Ṛṣis³.

-
1. Kak R.C., Antiquities of Basohli and Ramnagar. Indian Art and Letters. Vol. VII, No. 2. 1933. p. 79. Pl. VIII.
 2. Bhattacharya B., Indian Images, Vol. I. Pl. VIII. 1.
 3. Agni Purāṇa, II, 13.

An almost similar figure is in the collection of the Gwalior Museum from Gyaraspur. A big fish is carved on the panel and behind it are four human figures with hair tied in jatā. (fig. 26).

On the door jamb of the Lakṣmana temple at Khajuraho is the panel showing a fish on the lotus and four human busts above it. There are some animals and birds carved round the stylized lotus stalk¹.

A beautiful image of the fish incarnation has come to light from Chamba² belonging to about the eleventh century A.D. A large fish is supported by the lotus flower from the base of which rises a pillar. The capital of the pillar supports a three-handed Brahmā and four other deities in the abhaya-mudrā. Lakṣmī is seen below the head of the fish. Above its tail is a skirted female figure, possibly the donor.

The Udaipur Museum also has a slab depicting the fish incarnation. A large fish is carved on the top of the panel and below it are the four emblems of Viṣṇu, placed between the coils of a nāga.

These are some Matsya images from Northern India. Iconographically they hardly show any peculiarity or variation. We invariably find the fish incarnation on

1. Agrawal Urmila, op. cit. p. 35.

2. Kramrisch Stella, Indian Sculpture (Philadelphia, 1960), Plate 48.

the avatāra panels represented in the form of the fish. No shrine dedicated to the Matsyāvatāra has come to light so far, thus indicating its subsidiary character. The images described above are mostly from the outer walls of some temples which show that it was revered as an incarnation of Viṣṇu without any special significance.

KURMA: This animal, the tortoise, also designated as Kaśyapa is revered in the later Vedas quite often. It is respected with much adoration as "the regulator of the sun"¹. Elsewhere in the Atharva Veda also he is connected with the sun.

यत् ते चन्द्रं कश्यप रोचनावद् यत् संहितं पुष्कलं चित्रमानु ।
यस्मिन्सूर्या अर्पिता सप्तसाकं तस्य ----- ॥

"What silver, Kaśyapa, thou hast refulgent, what brightly shining lotus flower collected, wherein are gathered seven suns together, -----."

Griffith's Translation.

A.V. XIII, 3, 10.

The term Kaśyapa definitely connotes the sun in the Atharva Veda XVII, 1, 28.

परिवृतो ब्रह्मणा वर्मणाहं कश्यपस्य ज्योतिषा वर्त्मा च ।
मा मा प्रापन्निषवो देव्या या मा मानुषीरक्षुष्टा वधाय ॥

1. Griffith, Atharva Veda, ad. IV, 20, 7.

"Compassed as I am with prayer, my shield and armour;
compassed with Kaśyapa's bright light and splendour.
Let not shafts reach me, shot from heaven against me,
nor those sent forth by men for my destruction."

The commentary of Sāyana on the Atharva Veda XIX, 53, 10¹ also corroborates the same concept. He considers Kaśyapa to be one of the eight suns², and quotes from the Taittiriya Āraṇyaka to support his view. The connection between the tortoise and the big mountain which he supports on his back in the "churning of the ocean" episode is possibly hinted at in this passage.

It is possible that the disc-like shell of the tortoise, its slow movement and the act of withdrawing it within the shell, may have inspired the poets to compare it or to identify it with the sun. As a matter of fact, in the Caturbhāni, the slow-setting of the sun is compared

1. कालः प्रजा असृजत कालो अग्रे प्रजापतिम् ।

स्वयंप्रभुः कश्यपः कालात् तपः कालादजायत ॥

"Kāla created living things and first of all Prajāpati, from Kāla self-made Kaśyapa and from Kāla the holy fire was born".

(Griffith)

2. Sāyana,

--- कश्यपः आरोगम्राजादि सप्तसूयपिदाया अष्टमः सूर्यः ।

3. Taittiriya Āraṇyaka,

कश्यपोऽष्टमः । स महामेरुं न जहाति ।

to the movement of the tortoise¹.

The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa discusses in great detail the symbolism of the tortoise. It is identified with the life-sap of this world, the whole universe and the sun. It compares the Purodāsa with the tortoise and then explains its significance.

"He (the priest) then puts down a (living) tortoise: the tortoise means the life-sap. It is life-sap he thus bestows on Agni. This tortoise is that life-sap of these worlds which flowed away from them when plunged into the waters: that life-sap he now bestows on Agni. As far as the life-sap extends, so far the body extends: that (tortoise) thus is these worlds."²

The tortoise is thus considered to be the life-sap of the world and hence is identified with it. The same text contains the following legend explaining why the tortoise is the life-sap of the world:

"Prajāpati desired to create the Earth. So he compressed the Prīmaeval Egg. The juice which flowed

1. Caturbhāṇi, (ed.) Dr. Moti Chandra, Bombay. 1959.

हेमः कूर्म इवाक्सीदति शनैः संक्षिप्त पादो रविः ।

II, Dhūrtavīṭa Samvāda. 70. p.119.

2. Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, VII, 5, 1.

from it became a tortoise".¹ Kāśyapa, then, personified as the life-sap of the world, could naturally be said to be the Lord of Creation. His role as the Lord of Creation is so much emphasised that it is fancifully said to have assumed the name Kūrma only because he created the living beings².

It is said, "Prājapati having assumed the form of Kūrma created living beings. What he created, he made; and as he made he is called Kūrma. And Kūrma being same as Kāśyapa, all the creatures are said to have descended from Kāśyapa. This tortoise is the same as the yonder sun³.

This particular aspect of the tortoise amply justifies the important role played by it in the myth of the churning of the ocean - symbolising the myth of creation⁴.

-
1. सोऽकामयत् । आभ्यो ह्यो धीमां प्रजननेयमिति तां संक्लिश्याप्सु प्राविध्यतस्यै यः पराङ् सौ त्यदारत्स कूर्मो भवद् ----- ।

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, VI, 1, 1, 12.

2. स यत्कूर्मोनाम । एतदे रूपं कृत्वा प्रजापतिः प्रजा असृजत यदसृजता - करोत्यदकरोत्स्मत्कूर्मः कश्यपो वै कूर्मस्तस्मादाहुः सर्वाः प्रजाः काश्यप्य इति ।

Ibid., VII, 5, 5.

3. स यः स कूर्मो सौ स आदित्यो ।

Ibid., VII, 5, 6.

4. Gonda, Aspects of Early Visnuism. p. 129.
also Coomaraswamy A.K., Yakshas, p. 53.

The shape and the frame of the tortoise has also something to do with its identification with the universe, of which he is the creator. According to the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa

"the lower shell of the tortoise is this (the terrestrial) world; it is as it were fixed, for fixed as it were is this world. And that upper shell of it is the yonder sky; it has its ends, as it were bent down. And what is between (the shell) is the air; - that (tortoise) thus is these worlds. It is these worlds he thus lays down (to form the part of the Altar)".¹

In the Vājasaneyī Samhitā² the Kāśyapa is also called the Lord of the Waters. In the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, while piling up of the fire altar in the sacrifice, the tortoise is built into it, where it is left as the lord of the waters.³

Great reverence is paid to the cosmic tortoise in the Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa⁴. The Ṛsis seek to behold something wondrous in the waters which they address as Yakṣa. Indra reveals to them the tortoise or kūpāra of boundless dimension. The term akūpāra, as explained in the Nirukta stands for

-
1. Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, VII, 5, d.
 2. Vājasaneyī Samhitā, 13, 31.
 3. Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, VII, 5, 1.
 4. Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa, III, 203, 27d.

the waters or the ocean, for the sun and for the tortoise.¹ It is also said in the Nirukta that the Kaccha or Khaccha means the one who covers the sky thus identifying him with the sun. It is, therefore, clear that the tortoise symbolises the sun and the waters and is also considered to be the Lord of Creation. It is his connection with the sun and the waters that led to the identification of Viṣṇu with Kūrma in the Purāṇas.

The only important part which Kūrma played as an incarnation of Viṣṇu was in the Churning of the Ocean in which it served as a support of the mountain Mandara. The legend of the Churning of the Ocean has its roots in the Vedas in the opinion of Dr. Coomaraswamy². The story is found in its full-fledged form in the two epics, the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata, though the two versions differ. According to the Rāmāyana³ the sons of Kaśyapa begotten by Diti and Aditi, i.e. the Devas and the Dānavas, decided to churn the ocean, the abode of Varuṇa, to attain eternal life through Amṛta and also to obtain the riches of the nether world. They used the Mandara mountain as the churning staff and the serpent Vāsukī as the churning rope. Then follows the list of various objects that came out from the ocean. At the end, the partners quarrelled amongst themselves for the Amṛta and ultimately the sons of Diti were defeated and killed or banished.

1. Nirukta, IV, 18.

2. Coomaraswamy, op. cit. p. 53.

3. Rāmāyana, N.W. version. I. 41.
S. Recension. I. 46.

Strangely enough, in the whole episode the tortoise which plays quite an important role in the story related in the Purāṇas, is conspicuous by its absence. In the Mahābhārata¹ version, however, the story assumes a completely different shape. The gods and the demons wanted to churn the ocean in order to obtain Amṛta. They wanted as support for the churning staff, the mountain Mandara. The gods approached the tortoise king (kūrma-Rājan) to lend his back or shell as a support to Mandara. It is noteworthy that Kūrma here is in no way connected with Viṣṇu or with any other god. Hence, it may be surmised that the churning of the ocean and the tortoise, who in its deified form is symbolically connected with the creation myth, were assimilated in one legend, and what we find in the Purāṇas is the complete Viṣṇuised version of a popular folklore.

The identification of the tortoise and Viṣṇu might have taken place in the Gupta period for the Kūrma appears definitely as an incarnation of Viṣṇu in the Viṣṇudharmottaram (Purāṇa)². In the Viṣṇu Purāṇa³ it is said that Viṣṇu assumed the form of Kūrma at the time of the churning of the ocean. The legend runs as follows:

-
1. Mahābhārata, I, 16ff.
 2. Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 85, 59.
 3. Viṣṇu Purāṇa, I, 9.



All the gods, when defeated by the demons approached Lord Viṣṇu for the invigoration of their power and valour. He advised them to invite the Dānavas to churn the ocean and to obtain Amṛta. He promised them to destroy the demons while they were engaged in churning the ocean. They were asked to use Meru as their churning staff and the serpent Vāsuki as their rope. On one side of the mountain stood the gods, on the other the demons. Viṣṇu himself becoming a tortoise supported the mountain Mandara on his back.

Like the Matsyāvatāra, Kūrma Avatāra also is very rarely sculptured and worshipped. There are no variations or complications in the iconographical details of the Kūrma. According to the Viṣṇudharmottaram and Agni Purāṇa the image of the Kūrma is to be made exactly in the form of a tortoise.

D.B. Spooner refers to a finely executed clay tortoise from Basarh¹, of the Gupta period. There is no mark of reverence paid to it and hence it is difficult to judge whether it represents the Kūrma incarnation of Viṣṇu. It is quite possible that it was revered merely as a creature of the waters as also seen on the marked coins found from Besnagar². Excepting this we have not

-
1. Spooner D.B., Excavations at Basarh. ASIAR, 1913-14. p. 121. Pl. XLIV, f.
 2. Bhandarkar D.R., Excavations at Besnagar. ASIAR, 1913-14. p. 221ff.

been able to find any representation of Kūrma in the Gupta period.

One of the most interesting images of the Kūrma incarnation has been recently added to the collection of the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benaras. A big tortoise with a well-rounded shell and rather long neck is placed on a pedestal. A striking feature of this image is the presence of a small four-handed figure of Viṣṇu, holding his usual emblems, on the neck of the tortoise. The right leg of the deity is firmly planted and the left leg is folded as in the Varāha images as if representing its emergence from the waters. This image datable to the 9th century A.D. was probably used in worship somewhere in the region adjoining Benaras (fig. 27).

An image of the Kūrma avatāra from Garhwa, is reproduced by B.C. Bhattacharya¹. Though the purpose of the sculptor is mainly to represent the Kūrma avatāra, he has also combined with it the Churning of the Ocean episode. A big tortoise is placed on a floral pedestal with its head stretched out. Above it on the panel can be seen a rod wound by the serpent coil. On the left of the staff appear three figures holding the serpent coil and a similar figure is seen to its right. The three figures on the left are adorned with the jatāmukuta while

1. Bhattacharya B.C., Indian Images. Vol. I. p. 14.
Pl. VIII, 2.

been able to find any representation of Kūrma in the Gupta period.

One of the most interesting images of the Kūrma incarnation has been recently added to the collection of the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benaras. A big tortoise with a well-rounded shell and rather long neck is placed on a pedestal. A striking feature of this image is the presence of a small four-handed figure of Viṣṇu, holding his usual emblems, on the neck of the tortoise. The right leg of the deity is firmly planted and the left leg is folded as in the Varāha images as if representing its emergence from the waters. This image datable to the 9th century A.D. was probably used in worship somewhere in the region adjoining Benaras (fig. 27).

An image of the Kūrma avatāra from Garhwa, is reproduced by B.C. Bhattacharya¹. Though the purpose of the sculptor is mainly to represent the Kūrma avatāra, he has also combined with it the Churning of the Ocean episode. A big tortoise is placed on a floral pedestal with its head stretched out. Above it on the panel can be seen a rod wound by the serpent coil. On the left of the staff appear three figures holding the serpent coil and a similar figure is seen to its right. The three figures on the left are adorned with the jatāmukuta while

1. Bhattacharya B.C., Indian Images. Vol. I. p. 14.
Pl. VIII, 2.

the one on the right has the kirītamukuta, probably indicating the demons and the gods. On either side of the Kūrma are two figures with folded hands.

In the right and back inner Pradaksinā-patha of the Lakṣmana temple at Khajuraho, the Kūrmāvatāra is represented in an interesting manner¹. Lord Viṣṇu is seated on a tortoise in Yogāsana with his two lower hands in the yoga-mudrā, and the other two holding the disc and the mace.

Some of the later Sanskrit texts have described the image of Kūrma in its anthropomorphic form. According to the Śrī Tattvanidhi, Kūrma should be of golden colour holding in two hands the disc and the conch and the other two hands should be held in the abhaya and the varada-mudrās. He should be adorned with pītāmbara and ornaments. The Sāttvata Samhitā³ and the Meru Tantra⁴ also describe the image of Kūrma holding the conch, the

1. Agrawal Urmila, op.cit. p. 36.

2. काञ्चनसन्निभः अमयः कर्णसं वरदहस्तः ।

पीताम्बरधरः सर्वालङ्कारभूषितः ॥

Śrī Tattvanidhi, (Venkatesvara Press)
dhyāna 215. (page 40).

3. Sāttvata Samhitā, XII, 69-70.

4. Meru Tantra, Venkatesvara Press, Bombay, 1904.

26, 26-27.

disc, the mace and the plough. Images corresponding to these dhyānas have not come to light so far.

A brief reference may here be made to the Churning of the Ocean scene which is several times depicted in Indian art. Though the Kūrma figures invariably in the churning of the ocean scene, the emphasis is mainly on the whole episode rather than on the Kūrma as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. There is a panel showing the churning of the ocean scene in the Gwalior Museum. The mountain Mandara is supported on a big tortoise with a rope consisting of the serpent Vāsuki, winding round it. On the right side of the mountain stands Viṣṇu holding the disc in his upper left hand, the rest of the hands being broken. On the left side of the mountain appears Sūrya and on the top is Indra on his elephant mount. There are six other figures accompanying him who may be identified as the moon, the sun, Lakṣmī (?), Kubera or Dhanvantari, the cow and an unidentified female figure¹.

A similar churning of the ocean scene is carved on the door jamb of the Lakṣmana temple of Khajuraho².

It is obvious from the meagre data that the Kūrma avatāra had almost escaped the attention of the worshippers

1. Khare G.H., Mūrti Vijñāna. Poona, 1939. Pl. XV.

2. Agrawal Urmila, op. cit., p. 36-37.

of Viṣṇu. In literature also there is hardly anything written containing an invocation or appreciation of Kūrma. Only an inscription from Dhar, datable to the early 13th century contains two odes in the Āryā metre to the tortoise incarnation of Viṣṇu, one of which was composed by king Bhoja of Malva, who reigned in the 11th century¹.

The rarity of the images of the Matsya and Kūrma avatāras may tempt one to conclude that these avatāras had hardly any relevance for the worshippers of Viṣṇu, but at the same time there is every possibility that there might have been a small number of Vaiṣṇavas who worshipped these avatāras - may be merely as totems. Further researches are awaited to throw light on the subject.

1. ASIAR. 1902-03. P. 18.

VARĀHA

The origin of Varāha worship can be traced back to the period when Indian mythology was still "in its making", when people saw divinity in the varied force of nature. While it is difficult to trace the origin of various Rig-vedic gods and their subsequent development, it is almost certain in the case of Varāha cult as found out by Prof. Gonda and U.P. Shah. They have suggested that the cult must have existed in the Vedic or even the pre-vedic period¹.

In the Rig-veda itself several gods are equated with the boar. The Maruts are called the 'iron tusked boars'², and also the 'wild boars'.³ Rudra is addressed as the boar of the sky⁴. The boar in the form of demon Vṛtra⁵, plays a significant role in the Vedic mythology which laid the foundation of the whole of the Varāha myth in the later period.

Vṛtra in the Vedas is the personification of the clouds⁶ and therefore, the boar as identified with Vṛtra represents

1. Shah U.P., Vṛṣākapi in the Rig-veda, JOI, Baroda 1968. Vol. VIII. No. I. p. 56.

2. Rig-veda, I, 88.

3. Ibid., X, 67, 7.

4. Ibid., I, 114, 5.

5. Ibid., I, 121, 11; 61, 7; VIII, 66, 10; X, 99, 6.

6. Keith A.B., Indian and Iranian Mythology (Mythology of All Races, Vol. VI), p. 35.

the same natural phenomenon. Yāska in his Nirukta¹ offers the following explanation while discussing the term Varāha: Varāha is the designation of both, the cloud and the boar, for Varāha is the one who eats the best type of food. The cloud is Varāha because it takes the best food, viz. the water, so also is the boar as he takes the best roots that grow up. Thus the cloud and the boar are etymologically identified. We can say that Varāha is the therimorphic form of the Vartra, that is, the cloud. In spite of a tortuous way of reasoning and a fanciful etymology, the equation of Varāha with the clouds or primordial waters seems a sound proposition. The same idea is implied by a hymn of the Atharva-veda:²

मत्वं बिभ्रती गुरु पृष्ठं भद्रपापस्य निधनं तितित्तुः ।
वराहेण पृथिवी संविदाना सुकराय विजिहीते मृगाय ॥

Unfortunately, Whitney in his translation of the term Varāha as the boar, has obscured the meaning of the hymn.

-
1. वराहो मेघो भवति वराहारः । वरमाहारमाहर्णीर् । इति च ब्राह्मणम् ।

Nirukta, V, 4.

See the commentary by Durga:

मेघस्तावद् वराह उच्यते । स हि वराहारो भवति, तस्य वरं उदकं आहारः ।
वरमाहारमाहर्णीर् इति च ब्राह्मणम् । अयमपीतरो वराह एतस्मादेव ।
असावपि वरं मूलारथं आहारमाहरत्येव । वरं वरं मूलं वृहति ।
उच्यच्छ्रुतीत्यर्थः ।

2. Saunakiya Atharva-veda, XII, 1,48.

He translates it as follows:

"Bearing the fool, bearer of what is heavy, enduring death of the excellent and of the evil, the earth, in concord with the boar, opens itself to the wild hog".

If Varāha is taken here to mean the cloud, the meaning becomes quite clear - 'the earth in accord with the cloud, yields (corn?) to the hogs and animals.' It is implied in the hymn that the earth yields corn and riches to the people with the help of Varāha. He is therefore, naturally called the protector or the supporter of the riches. In the R̥g-veda it is said: 'Indra, shooting across the cloud mountain, slew the boar Emūṣa'.¹

The extension of this myth is found in the Taittiriya Samhitā². The legend relates that the boar kept the wealth of the Asuras concealed behind the seven hills. Indra picks up a blade of kūśa grass and piercing the hills, slew the boar. Thus the gods acquired the riches of the Asuras. A parallel legend appears in the Kapisthala Katha Samhitā.³

1. R̥g-veda, VIII, 77, 10.

2. Taittiriya Samhitā, VI, 2, 4, 2.

3. एमूषो नामायं वराह इत्यब्रवीदेकविंशत्याः पुराणममहीनां पारे यत्किंचासुराणां वामं क्शु तेन तिष्ठति तं जहि य एष कृच्छ्रे हन्तवोक्था इति ।

Kapisthala Katha Samhitā, XXXVIII, 5.

also compare वराहोऽयं वाममोषः in the passage of the T.S.

I am indebted to Prof. G.C. Jhala for helping me in the interpretation of the text.

It says:

"There is a Varāha called Emūsa behind the twenty forts of the Asuras, who has all the wealth the demons. You (Indra) go and destroy him". Keith¹ has translated the term Emūsa as fierce. The term is really the keynote to the character of the boar. Musa (Moṣa) means the one who carries off or steals, vāma or ī stand for the riches or treasures. Thus, Varāha or Emūsa Varāha means the one who carries off the riches or treasures, therefore, the earth - the embodiment of the riches. It may be noted in brief here that this very character is reflected in the words of Matsya Purāṇa² where Varāha is likened to the manisṛṅga, the cornucopia, which is considered to be a nidhi. It may refer symbolically to the act of Varāha of bringing forth the riches of the nether world in the form of the earth.³

In the Brahmanic literature, the relation of Varāha with the earth is fully established. The boar becomes a personified form of the great deity Prajāpati. The Kapisthala Katha Samhitā⁴ refers to the following legend

1. Keith A.B., op. cit., p. 30.

2. क्वायापत्नी सहायो वै मणिशृङ्ग इवोच्छ्रितः ।

Matsya Purāṇa, 248, 73.

3. Dr. Moti Chandra, Nidhisṛṅga, Bulletin of the PWM of Western India, No. 9. p.

4. सलिलमेव स प्रजापतिर्वराहो भूत्वोपन्यमञ्जत् । तस्य यावन्मुहं
आसीत् तावतीं मृदमहरत् । सैयमभवत् ।

Kapisthala Katha Samhitā, VI, 7.

concerning the origin of the cosmos.

"In the beginning there were primaeval waters - Once Lord Prajāpati, taking the form of a boar entered it (plunged into it) and he brought up (on the surface) the soil exactly of the size of his snout. That soil became this very earth". A similar legend appears in the Taittiriya Samhitā¹. It says that in the beginning there were only the primaeval waters, Prajāpati taking the form of Vāyu entered the waters where he saw her (the earth) and then in the form of the boar he brought her up on the surface, assuming the form of Viśvakarmā planned her. She expanded and hence became Prthvī (the expanded one).

Emūsa Varāha is stated to have raised up the earth from the waters in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa². The Taittiriya Āraṇyaka³ mentions that the Earth was formerly upheld by the black boar with a hundred arms.

Mythology of Varāha rescuing the Earth from the waters

1. आपो वा इदमग्रे सलिलमासीत् । तस्मिन् प्रजापतिर्वायुं भूत्वाऽहरत् ।
स इमामपश्यत् तां वराहो भूत्वाऽहरत् । तां विश्वकर्मां भूत्वा
व्यमार्द । साऽप्रथत सा पृथिव्यभवत् ।

Taittiriya Samhitā, VII, 1, 5, 1.

2. Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, XIV, 1, 2, 11.

3. भूमिर्धनुर्धरणी लोकधारिणी ।

उद्धृतासि वराहेण कृष्णेन शतबाहुना ।

Taittiriya Āraṇyaka, X, 1, 8.

is observed in its initial stages in these passages from the Brahmanic literature cited above. It deserves to be noted that Varāha is one of the forms of Prajāpati in its initial stages. His connection with Viṣṇu, whose important incarnation he became in the later period, is completely unknown at this stage.

The relation is also established between the boar and the sun due perhaps to its connection with the clouds. Varāha, right from the time of the R̥g-veda was referred to as Vṛṣākapi. In the Vṛṣākapi hymn of the R̥g-veda (X, 86), Vṛṣākapi stands for Varāha as suggested by Dr. U.P. Shah¹. In the Mahābhārata it is stated that Vṛṣākapi is the form Varāha.

कपिवराहः श्रेष्ठश्च धर्मश्च वृष उच्यते ।

तस्मात् वृषाकपिं प्राहः काश्यपो मां प्रजापतिः ।

Mahābhārata, XII, 330, 24.

Harivamśa² and Matsya Purāṇa³ also refer to the identity of Vṛṣākapi and Varāha. Vṛṣākapi is identified with the sun in several texts. The Gopatha Brāhmaṇa (II, 6, 12) says: Adityo vai Vṛṣākapiḥ.

1. Shah U.P., op. cit., p. 41ff.

2. ततो विष्णुः प्रवराहरूपधृक् -
वृषाकपिः प्रसभमथैकं दंष्ट्रया ।

Harivamśa, III, 34, 48.

3. Matsya Purāṇa, 247, 79.

In the Mahābhārata he is considered to be one of the eleven Rudras (Mahābhārata XIII, 7091). Harivamśa and Matsya Purāṇa¹ establish the identity of Vṛṣākapi and the sun or the Agni.

According to Dr. V.S. Agrawala² Agni and Sūrya are the names of Varāha. In the Bhāgavata it is said, ^{अग्निप्रथमोऽपि कश्च सूर्यः} Varāha is thus the triple force of the cosmos which, according to the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa³ is symbolised by the sun.

Lastly, the description of Varāha as 'Chhāyāpatnī saḥāyo' goes to prove the same fact. Chhāyā evidently is the consort of Sūrya, but here according to some Purāṇas⁴ she accompanies Varāha. It shows that the original solar character of Varāha has been emphasised.

In the Mahābhārata, Varāha has definitely been incorporated in the avatāra cycle of Viṣṇu. It is stated that Madhusūdana or Janārdhana assumed the form of Varāha, Simha (Nṛsimha), and Trivikrama⁵. The first detailed account of

1. हिरण्यरेतास्त्रिशिरः भूत्वा वृषाकपिः ।
शिशिभिर्विधमंलोकानशोणयत वह्निना ॥

Matsya Purāṇa, 246, 79.

2. Dr. V.S. Agrawala, Yajña Varāha - An Interpretation.
Purāṇa Vol. V, No. 2, p. 225ff.

3. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, 10, 5, 2, 2.

4. Harivamśa, III, 34, 31.

Also see Vāyu Purāṇa, VI, 22; Matsya Purāṇa, 247, 73.

5. मधुसूदनमित्याहुः शयञ्च जनार्दनम् ।
वराहश्चैव सिंहश्च त्रिविक्रमगतिः प्रभुः ॥

Mahābhārata, VI, 63, 13.

the Varāha myth is found in the Harivamsa¹.

I

According to the texts on iconography, the Varāha images have two forms. It can either be anthropomorphic or zoomorphic. The Viṣṇudharmottaram describes the various forms of Varāha as follows:

"Nṛvarāha should be represented on Śeṣa, having four hands with a beautiful jeweled hood, his eyes full of wonder looking at the goddess. In his natural hands should be placed the ploughshare and the club and his other two hands should be held in the añjali-mudrā. He should be adorned with snakes. In another form he is seen in the ālīdha pose on Śeṣa. On his left arm rests the goddess Earth, with both of her hands engaged in salutation. He holds the club in his upper left hand. The other holding the disc, may be raised in order to kill the demon Hiranyākṣa, who has a trident in his hand².

1. Harivamsa, III, 34, 30-43.

2. नृवराहोऽथ वा कार्यः शेषोपरिगतः प्रभुः ।
 शेषश्चतुर्भुजः कार्यश्चासुरतनफणान्वितः ॥
 आश्चर्योत्फुल्लनयनो देवीवीक्षणतत्परः ।
 कर्तव्यो सीरमुसलो करयोस्तस्य यादव ॥
 सर्पपूषश्च कर्तव्यस्तथैव रक्षिताञ्जलिः ।
 अलीढ स्थानसंस्थानस्तत्पृष्ठे भगवान्भवेत् ॥
 यस्मिन्भुजे धरादेवी तत्र शंखः करे भवेत् ।
 अन्ये तस्य कराः कार्याः पद्मचक्रगदाधरः ॥
 हिरण्यादाशिरश्चक्रेदश्चक्रोद्यतकरोऽथ वा ।

There is another way of representing Varāha where he is seated in meditation like the sage Kapila. He may also be shown holding a pinda, symbolising the earth, with his two hands¹.

The fourth type represents him amongst many demons as the very personification of anger. He may either have a human form or the form of a boar while uplifting the Earth.

None of these forms described in the Viṣṇudharmottaram appear in iconography. The earliest image so far found is unique from the iconographical point of view.

It is an inscribed image belonging to the Kushana period, preserved in the Mathura Museum (No. 65.51). The four-handed Varāha with his lower arms akimbo, holds in his upper hand a sun disc. The Earth goddess is supported on his shoulders and seems to be touching his mutilated snout. The śrīvatsa mark appears on his chest. To the right of the main image is a Gāndharva and the figure knocked down on the floor may be the demon Hiranyākṣa whom Varāha had defeated as mentioned in the Viṣṇudharmottaram. To the left is a devotee standing in the añjali-mudrā. The two sun discs in the hands of Varāha signify his connection with the sun. (fig. 28)

Several images of Varāha belonging to the Gupta period

1. Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 79, 9-10.

testify to the strong prevalence of Varāha worship in that period. The Mudrārākṣasam, a drama supposed to have been written in the Gupta period also refers to it. Its concluding verse compares the great victory of Chandragupta with Varāha's conquest of the Earth¹. Caturbhāṇi refers to Sūkara-siddhi and indicates that the wrestlers propitiated him for strength.

The colossal Varāha image of Udaygiri has been published several times. It is a two-handed image standing on the Śeṣa supporting the goddess on his snout. There are several rows of figures behind him who are considered to be the ṛṣis. This is a peculiar feature so far not noticed in any other Varāha image. This huge figure occupying a very big panel of the cave, signifies, according to Dr. Agarwal and others, the conquest of the earth by the renowned king Vikramāditya, during whose reign this image is supposed to have been carved.

Another very interesting image is found from Eran in Sagar District. There is a temple of Mahā-Viṣṇu supposedly built during the reign of Chandragupta Vikramāditya. It

-
1. Mudrārākṣasam, VII, 18.
 2. Caturbhāṇi, (ed.) Motichandra, p. 196. Verse 62.
 3. Agrawal V.S., Gupta Yugmen Madhyadeśkā Kalāṅmak citraṇ.
Nāgari Pracārinī Patrikā, Vikramāṅka, p. 48.
 4. Zimmer, The Art of Indian Asia, Vol. II, Pl. 109.

contains a shrine of Varāha to its right side, in which is installed a colossal Varāha image¹, measuring 16' x 11'. It bears a Brāhmī inscription dated in the first regnal year of the Huna chief Toramāna. It also records the construction of a temple to enshrine this image, which indicates the importance of Varāha worship in that region. The image is to some extent similar to the Udayagiri Varāha, excepting the rows of ṛsis behind him. The Devī is shown hanging by the tusk of the boar. The image is two-handed, the right hand is kaṭi-hasta, the left one rests on the knee of the folded left leg, which instead of being placed on the hood of the serpent is placed on the stone base. Behind the right leg is a small female figure, probably a caurī-bearer.

One of such early images is also preserved in the Daśavatāra temple at Badoli. The right hand of the god rests on his waist and the left one holds a lotus on which stands the goddess Prthvī. The left leg of the god is placed on the hood of the nāga couple (DGA No. 1819/60).

A mutilated Varāha carved in the round, datable to the early years of the 5th century is found from Mathura and is preserved in the collection of Kṛṣṇa Janmabhūmi temple.

1. Bajpai K.D., Sagar Through the Ages. p. 36, Pl. IV.

The Allahabad Museum has a much mutilated but quite an interesting image of Varāha. It is carved on a square stone, probably forming a part of a big pillar. It has four figures carved on its four sides, one of which contains the image of Varāha with the Devī held on his left arm. Below his feet is seen the reclining serpent with human face, holding his hand in añjali-mudrā. The left leg of the god is on the serpent's chest and the other is on the coils. (Museum No. 292)

It is remarkable that all the early images of Varāha mentioned above, except the one of the Kushana period, are two-handed and without any of the Vaisṇava āyudhas in their hands. It is only in the late Gupta period that Varāha images have four hands holding the peculiar emblems of Viṣṇu. So far as is known to us, no text on iconography has described the image of Varāha with two hands, like the sculptures described above. The description given in the

Matsya Purāṇa¹ is doubtful about the number of hands attached to the Varāha image. If in the pada 30a the correct reading is tasya instead of tasyāh, it may indicate four hands.

Mahāvarāha holds the lotus and the mace in his hands. The goddess, whom he has brought up by his pointed tusk, is seated on his left arm holding a lotus. Her eyes are full of wonder gazing at her lord. The right hand of the god is placed on his waist. One of his legs rests on the Kūrma and the other one rests on the hood of the serpent Śeṣa.

Generally the four-handed Varāha holds either three or sometimes four emblems in his hands, however, it is also possible to find the four-handed Varāha without any of the Vaiṣṇava emblems, for instance, the Varāha image found from

1. महावराहं वक्ष्यामि पद्महस्तं गदाधरम् ।
तीक्ष्णदंष्ट्रघोणास्यं मेदिनीवामकर्पूरम् ॥
दंष्ट्रेणोद्धृतांदान्तां धरणीमुत्पलान्वितम् ।
विस्मयोत्फुल्लनयनामुपरिष्ठात्प्रकल्पयेत् ॥
दक्षिणं कटिसंस्थं तु करं तस्याः प्रकल्पयेत् ।
कूर्मोपरि तथा पादमेकं नागेन्द्रमूर्धनि ॥



Matsya Purāṇa, 260, 28-30.

also compare the description given in the Silparatna, XXV, 113-115,

and the description given in the Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa, V, 72-76.

Rajim¹ has four hands, the front two clasped near the chest, the lower right is hanging down and the lower left is placed on the folded left knee. The left leg of Varāha is placed on the hand of a nāga in human form seated below with the hooded head. The Earth goddess is seen as in the other images, seated on the elbow of the god. In the adjacent slab are carved many nāga figures in the añjali-mudrā, paying their reverence to the god.

II

The post-Gupta and mediaeval period have produced innumerable Varāha images all over Northern India. The most common type is the image with four hands, the right hands holding the mace and/or the lotus, and the left hands holding the disc and the conch. Sometimes the disc is held in the right hand instead of the left. R.D. Banerjee has published several such images from Eastern India². One of the distinguishing features of some of the Eastern Indian images of Varāha is that between his legs, there appears a small figure of the boar and the goddess Prthvī by its side, indicating Varāha's dive into the primaeval

1. Rao T.A.G., Elements of Hindu Iconography, Vol. I, Part I, Pl. XXXVIII.

2. Banerji R.D., Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture, Delhi, 1933. Pl. XLV b, c, d, e.

waters to rescue the Earth, and the principal image indicating his emergence out of the waters. There is no need to enumerate all the Varāha images found from the whole of Northern India, some of which have already been published¹.

Out of the overwhelming number of Varāha images we have chosen some which are important from the iconographical point of view. A small shrine at Devangana near Abu contains an image of Varāha belonging to about the eighth century A.D. The god seizes with his lower hands, two nāgas by their tails. They are worshipping the god with folded hands. The upper right hand of Varāha holds the disc, the upper left arm, supporting the goddess on the elbow is mutilated. The lower right hand, besides holding the tail of the nāgas (nāgi?) is in katihasta-mudrā and the lower left hand holds the tail of the nāga and the conch. Below on the left side stand two figures with folded hands. The leg of the god is supported on the hood of the nāga couple who are also seen paying their respect to the god (fig. 29). This peculiar feature of seizing the nāgas by their tails may

-
1. Bhattasali N.K., Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum, Dacca, 1929, Pl. XXXVI.

also refer to

ASIAR, 1930-34. Part II. pp. 303ff. Pl. CL d.

Burgess and Cousens, Architectural Antiquities of Northern Gujarat, p. 86 and 106. Pl. XLIII, XCI.

Dave Kaniyalal, Gujarātṇu Mūrtividhān, p. 190ff.

symbolize the conquest of Varāha over the demigods of the nether world whom he had subdued. A verse in the Agni Purāṇa describes the image of Varāha holding the serpent Śeṣa in his hand¹, but excepting this stray reference, no other text on iconography has any reference to this particular feature of Varāha's iconography.

An almost identical image of Varāha is in the shrine of the Sachiā Mātā temple at Osian, near Jodhpur. Here, the god has seized the nāgi with folded hands, by her tail. In the upper right hand the god holds the mace while in the left hands are placed the conch and the disc. On the folded upper left arm of the god is seated the goddess Pṛthvī holding lotuses in her hands. The bent left leg of the god is placed on the full-blown lotus which is supported by a nāga couple. There is probably a dagger attached to the belt of the god. The image is a beautiful specimen of the western Indian art of the late ninth century (fig. 30).

The exterior of the shrine of the same temple also has a similar image of Varāha in the principal niche on the east². A Varāha image holding the nāga figure in the hand is preserved in the Jhalawar Museum.

1.

चतुर्बाहुर्वराहस्तु शेषः पाणितले धृतः ।

Agni Purāṇa, 49, 18a.

2. ASIAR, 1908-09, p. 106.

It is evident from the few images described above that this particular representation of Varāha holding the nāga or nāgas in the hands, is a peculiar feature of Western India.

The Gwalior Museum has in its collection two peculiar images of Varāha, both belonging to about the 9th century. One four-handed Varāha holds the mace in his upper right hand and the lower right is in the kaṭihasta-mudrā. In the upper and the lower left hands he holds the disc and the conch. The goddess Earth is seated cross-legged on the folded upper left arm of the god, with one of her hands touching the snout of the boar and the other resting on her lap. The left leg of the god rests on a lotus having a long stalk, on the either side of which is seen a nāga and a nāgī. The second image is almost identical with the one described above, except for the order of the conch and the wheel in the left hands of the god. A very noteworthy feature of these images is the small dagger attached to the belt of the god on the right side.

A much mutilated image found from Agroha in Punjab¹ resembles these images to a great extent. The god holds his common emblems - the mace, the conch which is mutilated, and the disc. The goddesses Sri and Bhūmi are seen flanking

1. Shrivastava H.L., Excavations at Agroha-Punjab, MASI, No. 61, Delhi, 1952. p. 3, Pl. X, i.

the god on either side of the belt of the image. It is datable to the 9th century.

According to the Matsya Purāṇa, Silpaśāstra and Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa, etc., one of the legs of Varāha is to be supported by the kūrma and the other by the nāgas¹, but all the images referred to so far place the nāga or the nāga-couple below his left foot, the kūrma below the right leg remaining absent. Fortunately, a couple of images have come to light that tally exactly with the descriptions given by the Silpaśāstra.

One is the collection of the Allahabad Museum (No.432), found from Khajuraho is a fine specimen of this type. Varāha with the Earth goddess on his upper left arm, has one of his legs resting on a lotus held by a nāga couple and the other is placed on the back of the kūrma. His lower right hand is in the kaṭāhastā-mudrā, upper right hand holds the mace, the upper left hand holds the disc and the lower left is broken. Below on the either side are seen the devotees. This richly-ornamented figure of Varāha has the small dagger attached to his belt.

1. कूर्मपृष्ठे पदद्वयं अन्यन्नागेन्द्र मूर्धनि ।

Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa, V, 74b.

also see

श्री कूर्मपृष्ठमध्यस्थ शेषमूर्त्यब्ज संस्थितम् ।

Skanda Purāṇa, II, Vyankateśvara Mahātmyam, 2, 16b.

One notable feature in this image is the presence of Dhyāni Viṣṇu on the top of the panel. He is seated on a lotus forming the canopy over the head of Varāha. His two front hands are in the dhyāna-mudrā, the other two probably hold the lotuses. A much mutilated figure of Varāha preserved in the State Museum, Lucknow (No. H123), also has a kūrma below his right leg (fig. 31).

One may question the propriety of Kūrma who is one of the incarnations of Viṣṇu, appearing as a subsidiary figure under the foot of Varāha. But in this class of images, it seems to signify, like the ṇāga figures associated with the god, the nether world which the god had entered to rescue the goddess Earth. It is unlikely that the tortoise below Varāha represents Kūrma avatāra of Viṣṇu.

The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, has another image representing all the features peculiar to the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu. It is a haloed four-handed figure, holding from the lower right hand in the clockwise direction, the tail of a ṇāga, the mace, the conch and the disc. On the elbow of the upper left arm is seated the goddess with folded hands. The figure is shaded with an umbrella. The bent left leg of Varāha rests on a lotus with a ṇāga couple seated on either side of its stalk. Under the right leg is either a snake or a fish - the creatures of the nether world. A small dagger is attached to the kamara-bandha of the figure. The Śaṅkha Puruṣa and the Cakra Puruṣa flank the main image (fig. 32).

The Sanskrit sources describe some other forms of Varāha which, however, have not been sculpturally represented in Northern India. The Skanda Purāna describes the image of Varāha having four hands, two of which hold the conch and the disc and the other two are in the abhaya and the varada-mudrā.¹ Though no such image has come to light from Northern India, this form is not unknown in the south. One such image of Varāha is published by T.A.G.Rao.²

The iconography of Varāha prescribed by the Tantric texts is more elaborate, the purpose behind its worship being the attainment of a particular object. According to them, Varāha is endowed with multiple hands, holding the disc, the conch, the sword, the dagger, the mace and the lance, while two of his hands are required to be in the abhaya and the varada-mudrā. He should be accompanied by the Earth goddess.³ Besides these, according to the Meru

1. चतुर्बाहुमुदारङ्गं वराह वदनं शुभम् ।

शंखचक्रामयवरान्बिभ्राणं पुराणोत्तमम् ॥

Skanda Purāna, II, Vaiṣṇava khanda,
Vyankatesvara Mahātmya, adh. 1, 18.

2. Rao T.A.G., op. cit., vol. I, Part I. Pl. XL.

3. आपादं जानुदेशाद्वरकनकनिभं नाभिदेशादधस्तात् ।

मुक्ताभं कण्ठदेशात्तरणविनिभं मस्तकान्नीलमासम् ॥

इडे हस्तैर्दधानं रथचरणद्वयैः सङ्गतेऽङ्गदास्थ्याम् ।

शक्तिं दानाभये च क्षितिघरणत्सदंष्ट्रमायं वराहम् ॥

Mantra Mahārṇava, Pūrva khanda, Viṣṇu Tantra,
tarāṅga, 7.

Tantra he is to be flanked by the goddesses Bhūmi and Lakṣmī¹.

The classification of the Varāha images in the south Indian texts is referred here briefly. The Varāha image is classified in three forms, viz. Bhūvarāha, Yajñavarāha and Pralayavarāha. Bhūvarāha has the human body and the boar's face. Two of his four arms hold the conch and the disc. One of his left arms supports the legs of the Earth goddess, seated on the god's bent right leg, while the right one embraces the goddess round her waist.

Yajñavarāha should be seated on the throne, with Lakṣmī on his right and Bhūmi to his left, both of them holding the lotuses. The god should hold the conch and the disc in two of his four hands.

Pralayavarāha is much like Yajñavarāha, the only difference being the position of the goddesses. One of the right hands of the god should be in the abhaya-mudrā, the left one resting on his thigh.²

III

So far the anthropomorphic representations of Varāha have been dealt with. The zoomorphic forms of Varāha is not

1. Meru Tantra, 26, 189-190.

2. Vaikhānasāgama, Pātala, 58. p. 196.

also see Atri Samhitā, adh. 58, verses 25-47.



discussed in details by the Śilpaśāstra texts but the sculptors have tried to carve him profusely in this form. The representation of Varāha does not seem to be very popular in the Gupta period. It seems to have become favourite in the post-Gupta period only.

An image of Mahāvarāha, the earliest of this kind, is found at Eran in the Sagar District¹. It is a huge figure of the boar with the figures of ṛṣis and deities carved on its body. On one side of his neck is seen the Earth goddess, hanging by the tusk of the boar, with her left arm, exactly in the way the goddess accompanying Nṛvarāha from Eran referred to above. In front of the boar is a nāga in human form. There are several rows of devotees (fig. 33). In the ear of the boar appears a flying figure. Near his neck is a belt with some unidentifiable figures carved on it. Brahmā is seen on its head. The image is datable to the 5th century A.D.

A few images of the kind have come to light from the mediaeval period. An image of Ādivarāha is worshipped in the Sabalpur temple at Modasa, in Gujarat, datable to the 11th century A.D. The seven-hooded serpent Śeṣa in human is standing on a Kūrma with folded hands. The coils of the

1. Coomaraswamy A.K., Viśvakarmā, Pl. XCIII. /London, 1914.
Keith A.B., Indian and Iranian Mythology (Mythology of Races, Vol. VI), Pl. XII.

serpent pass through the legs of the god, forming a knot at the end with the tail of the boar. Beside the Śeṣa is seen the Earth goddess, touching the head of Varāha with one of her hands. The conch and the disc are placed near his tail and the mace between the legs. Brahmā and several other gods of the Hindu pantheon are carved on his body.¹

The famous Ādivarāha found from Dudhai in Lalitpur district, now preserved in the Lucknow Museum, is a beautiful specimen of the 11th-12th century.² A very similar figure of the Boar is standing in situ at Chandpur bearing an inscription dated in samvat 1207/1150 A.D.³

Rajkot Museum has also a fine image of Ādivarāha found from Wardhavan. Several figures of the munis and deities are carved round his body as in the Eran Boar. Just below the mouth of Varāha appears Garuḍa with the snake hood around the head.

A very much mutilated piece of Ādivarāha, lying in the verandah of the Allahabad Museum depicts a row of figures on its body representing the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu as well as the Churning of the Ocean scene.

A similar image is found from Vasiṣṭhāśrama, Abu, where one of the legs of Varāha is supported on the disc and

1. Dave B., op.cit., p. 193.

2. Shastri Hirananda, Some Recently Added Sculptures in the Provincial Museum, Lucknow, MAI, No. 11, p. 13. Pl. III.

3. Ibid., p. 13.

the conch is lying by its side. Images of Ādivarāha have also come to light from Vijapur (fig. 34), Vihar, etc.

It is clear from the iconographic representations of Varāha that the cult had a wide prevalence right from the time of the Guptas. Individual temples, dedicated to Varāha are noted in some inscriptions. The stone pillar inscription from Eran, Central India, belonging to about the 6th century, mentions a temple of Varāha¹. The copper plate inscription of the time of Budhagupta, found from Damodarpur in Bengal, records the erection of Sveta Varāha temple, somewhere in Nepal². The shrine of the Varāha temple of the Gupta period still exists at Deogarh³. The Rājataranginī refers to the Varāhamūla or Varāhaksetra where the temple of Mahāvarāha existed⁴. It also mentions that the king Lalitāditya installed a magnificent image of Mahāvarāha⁵. The king Bhoja Deva of Kanauj had issued the Mahāvarāha coins⁶. Thus, it is evident that the Varāha cult had attained the royal patronage and was able to maintain its high position continually till the late mediaeval period.

1. ASIAR, 1923-24. p. 29-30.

2. Sircar, D.C., Kokamukha-Tirtha. Indian Historical Quarterly, Vol. XXI, March 1945. p.56ff.

3. Vats M.S., Gupta temple at Deogarh, MASI, No. 70. p. 2.

4. Rājataranginī, VII, 1309-10

5. Ibid., IV, 197.

6. Cunningham, Coins of Mediaeval India, London, 1894, p. 49.

The female counterpart of Varāha also plays a very important role. The Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā identifies Vārāhī with the Earth¹. She is never represented together with Varāha but acquired the position of a mother goddess individually. She is always included in the list of the Sapta-mātrkā also. Quite a few images of Vārāhī have come to light right from the 6th-7th century. Her iconography is varied and is much influenced by Tantrism as well.

1. Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā, 4, 4, 6.

2. Iyer K.B., Lalit Kalā, No. 12, p. 48. (Addendum to an Article on a Two-Faced Vārāhī Image from Jogesvari.)

NRSIMHA

It is rather difficult to trace the origin of Nṛsimha worship because early Brahmanical literature has not preserved any tradition justifying the symbolic significance of the beast. The lion as an embodiment of valour is sometimes revered, but it does not seem to have attained that position of a deity which Varāha and other incarnations do. Dr. Goetz suggests that Nṛsimha worship is the result of Scythian influence¹.

The earliest reference to Nṛsimha is his invocation. He is invoked and described as possessed of sharp claws and fangs².

वज्रनखाय विद्महे तीक्ष्णदंष्ट्राय धीमहि ।
तन्नो नारसिंहः प्रचोदयात् ॥

"May Nṛsimha, whom we meditate, as having sharp claws and keen fangs, inspire us."²

A similar reference is also found in the Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad³.

Neither of these references show any connection of Nṛsimha with Viṣṇu except that of juxtaposition - the invocation of

-
1. Goetz Hermann, The Early Wooden Temples of Chamba.
p. 85, n. 34.
 2. Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, X, 1.
 3. Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad, III, 17.

Nṛsimha follows that of Vāsudeva or Viṣṇu. The deity who is always connected with the destruction of the demon Hiranyakaśipu in the form of an incarnation of Viṣṇu in the Pauranic period, figures in the Vedas as a "divinity who can either protect or injure men".

In the Mahābhārata, Nṛsimha is considered to be one of the incarnations of Viṣṇu. It is said that Viṣṇu assumed many different forms in order to protect the world, viz. Varāha, Nṛsimha, Vāmana and Mānuṣa.¹

The first complete exposition of the myth of the Nṛsimhāvatāra is found in the Harivamśa.² The demon Hiranyakaśipu, after performing hard penance for ten thousand years, acquired a boon which assured him protection against gods and demons, Gandharvas and Yakṣas, human beings, evil spirits and beasts. He remained unaffected by the weather and remained safe in heaven or the nether world. He could only be murdered by one who was capable of killing him merely with a single stroke of his hand. This all-powerful demon

-
1. मयाधृता धारयति जगत्सिचराचरम् ।
 तस्मात्पृथिव्याः परिव्राणं करिष्ये संभवं गतः ॥
 एवं स चिन्तयित्वा तु भगवान्मधुसूदनः ।
 रूपाण्यनेकान्यमृजत्प्रादुर्भावमवाय सः ॥
 वराहं नारसिंहं च वामनं मानुषं तथा ।
 रश्मिर्मानिहन्तव्या दुर्विनीताः सुरारयः ॥

Mahābhārata, XII, 337, 34-36.

2. Harivamśa, III, 41-47.

became a terror to the gods and consequently they approached Brahma who directed them to Viṣṇu. After the repeated prayers of the gods for the destruction of the demon, Viṣṇu assumed the form of the Man-lion and proceeded to the demon's court. A fight ensued in which he defeated and killed all the demons and when Hiranyakaśipu rushed towards him, Nṛsimha tore out his entrails by his sharp claws. Prahlāda, the devout son of the demon, who recited a prayer at the end, plays an insignificant role in this version of the myth.

The Viṣṇu Purāṇa makes only a passing reference to the Man-lion incarnation. It only states that after his father had been put to death by Viṣṇu in the form of a Man-lion, Prahlāda became the ruler of the Daityas¹.

In the later purāṇas like the Bhāgavata-purāṇa², the story assumes a slightly different form. Hiranyakaśipu had proclaimed his sovereignty over the three worlds and no one in his kingdom was allowed to acknowledge the supremacy of any god. Prahlāda, his son, however, turned to be a great devotee of Viṣṇu, even at the risk of his father's wrath. Once Hiranyakaśipu asked him, if Viṣṇu was present everywhere, why was he not visible in the pillar of the hall where they had assembled, and saying this he struck the pillar which broke asunder. No sooner he did that, the Man-lion issued from the cleft and tore off the bosom of the demon.

1. Viṣṇu Purāṇa, XX.

2. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, VII, 8, 10.

These different accounts show the common origin of the myth and hence Wilson is probably justified in presuming that the Nṛsimha myth is a popular legend adapted by the worshippers of Viṣṇu to serve their purpose¹.

I

The image of Nṛsimha is described in brief in the Harivamśa². It only states that Nṛsimha tears open the demon with his nails, and holds in his hands the thunder-bolt, the lance and the sword.

The Viṣṇudharmottaram gives us a detailed description of the images of Nṛsimha. It says:

"The Nṛsimha image has strong shoulders, waist and neck. The middle part of his body and belly are lean. He has the face of a lion and the body of a man and his face is haloed. His ornamented image in ālīḍha pose, wears a blue garment. His face and mane are flamboyant. He has to be represented as tearing the bosom of Hiranyakaśipu with his sharp claws."³

1. Wilson H.H., The Viṣṇu Purāṇa, p. 119. n. 2. [London, 1840,

2. Harivamśa, III, 31, 44.

3.

पीनस्कन्धकटिग्रीवः कृशमध्यः कृशोदरः ।

सिंहासने नृदेहस्तु नीलवासाः प्रमान्वितः ॥

बालीढस्थानसंस्थानः सर्वाभरणभूषणः ।

ज्वालामालाकुलमुखो ज्वालाकेसरमण्डलः ॥

हिरण्यकशिपोर्वक्त्रः पाटयन्मखरैः खरैः ।

नीलोत्पलामः कर्तव्यो देवजानुगतस्तथा ॥

Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 78 (2).

Another variety of Nṛsimha image is also described by the same text:

"He should be represented as seated on a Simhāsana with his feet resting on the hands of Prthvī. Two of his hands should be placed on the mace head. His body should be surrounded by flames and he should hold in his hands the conch, the disc, the mace and the lotus. His hair is flamboyant."¹

It seems, however, that the sculptors of the Gupta period hardly took into consideration the injunction given by the Viṣṇudharmottaram, because from a number of Nṛsimha images available from the Gupta period, there is none that tallies exactly with the formulae given above.

One of the most interesting early representations of the Man-lion incarnation is executed on a seal found at Basarh², datable to the early Gupta period. Nṛsimha, with a lion's face and a human body, is seated on a high pedestal in the lalitāsana pose, with the left leg folded and the

1. सिंहासने सुखासीनः कार्यो वा भगवान्हरिः ।
 गदामस्तकविन्यस्तकरक्षितयभूषणः ॥
 ज्वालामालाकुलवपुः शंसपद्मधरः प्रभुः ।
 मूर्तिमत्पृथिवीहस्तन्यस्तपादोऽथ वोत्थितः ॥
 शंसचक्रगदापद्मलाङ्घ्रैः शोभितः करैः ।
 अग्निज्वालाकुलावर्तविभूषिततनूरुहः ॥

Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 78, (2).

2. Spooner D.B., Excavations at Basarh, ASIAR, 1913-14.
 p. 133. Pl. XLVI, No. 191.

right one hanging down. His right hand is raised up in the abhaya-mudrā and his left hand is supported on his knee. The small inscription below on the pedestal is not decipherable. The demon Hiranyakaśipu is conspicuous by his absence, and so also are the typical emblems of Viṣṇu. The vanamālā hanging upto his knees, however, indicates him to be a Vaiṣṇava deity. Another remarkable feature is that he is only two-handed (instead of four-handed) unlike the other images. The Gwalior Museum has a similar Nṛsiṃha image found at Besnagar, belonging to the Gupta period. It is also a two-handed image supporting a thickly maned lion head on a standing human body. Both of the hands being broken, nothing can be said about the emblems held by them, if any. The vanamālā is seen hanging down upto the knees. Behind his legs is probably a small pillar indicating his emergence from it¹.

A similar image hailing from Pahlejpur², about half a mile from the present Eran village, is lying in a shrine dedicated to Nṛsiṃha. Fortunately, even though the temple is in a ruined state, the image survives. This much-mutilated image was probably only two-handed, like the ones described above. The face and the mane are strikingly similar to the one from Besnagar. This image, enshrined in a Gupta

1. Coomaraswamy A.K., History of Indian and Indonesian Art. Pl. 170.

2. Bajpai K.D., Sagar Through the Ages. p. 36-37. Pl. V.

temple dedicated to Nṛsimha, testifies to the high position acquired by Nṛsimha in that period.

A peculiar image of Nṛsimha is represented in the chaitya window of the famous Daśāvatāra temple at Deogarh. The god is seated on a full-blown lotus in ardhaparyāṅkāsa. His upper right hand holds the mace, and the lower right, supported by his folded right knee, holds the disc. The upper left hand holds the conch and the lower left is placed on the thigh. The fierce lion-face is surrounded by the thick locks of the mane spreading on the shoulders. The ornamental mukuta is an uncommon feature for the Nṛsimha images of the Gupta period. The sculptor has tried to create an impression of flames around his head in the form of a halo. To the left of the deity is a devotee in the añjali-mudrā¹.

Another peculiar representation of Nṛsimha is also found in the Deogarh temple. A panel projecting in the centre of the doorway has an image of Viṣṇu seated on a coiled serpent. To his right stands a small human figure with a lion's head, evidently Nṛsimha. It is four-handed with two of his hands in the añjali-mudrā².

An exactly similar figure of Nṛsimha with Viṣṇu seated on a serpent's coils has come to light from the Udayagiri

1. Vats M.S., The Gupta Temple at Deogarh, MASI. No. 70, 1951. p. 21, Pl. XXIIc.

2. Ibid., Pl. IX a.

caves at Bhubaneshwar¹. Both these images represent Viṣṇu being adored by his own incarnatory form.

In the Bharat Kala Bhavana, Varanasi, there are two square pillars belonging to the Gupta period, on each side of which is carved a Vaiṣṇava deity. One of the four sides of both of them represents a four-handed image of Nṛsimha, standing in a samabhaṅga pose and holding the usual emblems of Viṣṇu. The lower right hand is placed on the mace; the left lower hand is placed on the disc which is mounted on a pedestal. The upper right hand holds the lotus and the upper left hand the conch. Both of them are adorned with the vanamālā. Excepting the lion's face, the execution of these images is similar to the standing four-armed Viṣṇu images (fig. 35).

Before we proceed further with our inquiry about the iconography of Nṛsimha, it is necessary to refer to a unique representation of the same found in a hillock near Kondamotu², 40 miles away from Guntur in a brick shrine, related stylistically to the Nagarjunakonda sculptures. The main figure of Nṛsimha is flanked on the right side by two and on the left side by three figures. Nṛsimha is represented as a couchant lion with taut legs. The Śrīvatsa appears prominently in the centre of his chest. To this lion, at the level

1. Daniélou Alain, Hindu Polytheism. Pl. XI.

2. Khan Abdul Wahid, An Early Sculpture of Nṛsimha, Hyderabad, 1964. Pl. I.

of the neck, belong two human hands holding the mace and the disc. To his right, the figure in abhaya-mudrā and the conch in his hand, may be identified with Viṣṇu. A figure holding the sugar-cane bow in his right hand and a makara standard in his left hand stands to the right of Viṣṇu; he is probably Kāma. To the left of Nṛsimha a figure in tribhaṅga pose holding a flute and the bow, may be that of Kṛṣṇa. Next to him may be Balarāma holding a wine goblet in his right hand and with his left arm akimbo. The last figure carrying the sword and the shield in his hands may be that of Aniruddha. This panel perhaps represents the Nṛsimha and the Pañcavira worship, and if the interpretation is correct, it is a very strong evidence supporting the prevalence of the Pañcavira worship in the early Bhāgavata religion. Another noteworthy feature is the execution of Nṛsimha which is completely zoomorphic excepting the two human hands attached to the neck. Though no such image has been found from Northern India, it is probable that this cult also existed there as early as the Gupta period.

The most remarkable feature of all the Nṛsimha images of the Gupta period is the total absence of the demon Hiranyakasipu with whom he is so closely associated. The Vaikhānasāgama describes the single images of Nṛsimha as the Kevala Nṛsimha, but the images referred to above do not tally with that description. Kevala Nṛsimha has either two or four arms. If he is four-handed, the upper right hand should hold the disc and the upper left hand should hold the conch. The front two hands should be resting on the knees. The Girija-

Nṛsimha, another variety of the single Nṛsimha, should be shown seated on a padmāsana in the utkutika posture, the forelegs being supported in this position by the Yogapaṭṭa¹. Nṛsimha seated with the yogapaṭṭa round his legs is commonly found in the south rather than in the north².

The number of Nṛsimha images found from the Gupta period is itself a testimony to the prevalence of the Nṛsimha cult in that period. The Gupta Nṛsimha images are not only numerous but are equally varied from the iconographical point of view. These iconographical forms could not have been evolved without the strong patronage and support to the cult by the people. It is likely that the Gupta kings patronized the Nṛsimha worship, since the last of the Gupta kings is named after the deity. A temple dedicated to Nṛsimha in Sagar³ testifies to Nṛsimha being a prominent cult god.

-
1. केवलं नृसिंहं पद्मपीठोपरिष्ठाद् द्वौ पादौ विन्यस्योपरि -
 उत्कुटिकासने नासयित्वोर्मध्ये वस्त्रेणाबध्य कतुर्भुजं
 शंसकधरं अन्यहस्ताभ्यां जानुद्वयोपरिष्ठात् प्रसारित
 नियुक्तं वा संस्थापयेत् ।

Vaikhānasāgama, Paṭala 58. p. 198.

Also see Ibid., Paṭala. 58. p. 198, for Stānu Nṛsimha.

2. Rao T.A.G., Elements of Hindu Iconography, Vol. I,

Part I. Pl. XLII.

3. Bajpai K.D., op. cit., p. 36.

II

In the post-Gupta period, Nṛsimha is almost invariably represented as killing the demon Hiranyakaśipu. This emphasis on the destruction of the demon is reflected in the dhyanas given in the post-Gupta texts. For instance, the Matsya-Purāṇa describes vividly the fight between the demon and the god. According to it, the image of Nṛsimha is to be made eight-handed, fierce and having the face of a lion with thick mane. He should be shown to be tearing out the entrails of the demon. Their legs should be interlocked and the demon with a sword and shield should be shown attacking the god¹.

The Agni-Purāṇa describes the four-handed image of Nṛsimha. Two of his hands should hold the disc and the mace, and he should be striking the bosom of the demon with the other two. The demon should be lying on his left thigh².

1. नारसिंहं तु कर्तव्यं भुजाष्टक समन्वितम् ।
 रुद्र सिंहाननं तद्वद्विदारितमुखेदाणम् ॥
 स्तब्धपीन सटाकर्णं दारयन्तं दितेः सुतम् ।
 विनिर्गतान्त्रजालं च दानवं परिकल्पयेत् ।
 वमन्तं रुचिरं घोरं भृकुटिवदनेदाणम् ॥
 युध्यमानश्च कर्तव्यः क्वचित्करणबन्धनेः ।
 परिश्रान्तेन दैत्येन तज्ज्यमानो मुहुर्मुहुः ॥
 दैत्यं प्रदर्शयेत्तत्र सङ्ग सैटक वारिणम् ।
Matsya Purāṇa, 269, 31-34.

2. नरसिंहो विवृतास्यो वामोरुधृत दानवः ।
 तद्वद्वारिणं दारयन्माली स्फुरच्चक्रगदाधरः ॥
Agni Purāṇa, 49, 4.

According to the other description given in the same Purāṇa, he should hold the disc and the conch in his two hands and the other two should be engaged in killing the demon¹.

Besides these four- and eight-handed images, we come across six-handed images of the god as well. Hence, the mediaeval images of Nṛsimha can be divided according to the number of hands into the four-, six-, eight- and twelve-handed variety.

The four-handed images generally hold the two Vaiṣṇava emblems in the upper hands and the front two hands are shown employed in killing the demon. One such four-handed image is in the collection of the Indian Museum, Calcutta. The god holds in his upper two hands the mace and probably the conch. The front two hands are tearing out the bosom of Hiraṇyakaśipu who is lying on his folded left knee. The image seems to have been flanked by Śrīdevī and Bhūmidevī. This mutilated image is a specimen of the Pala art².

An image of Nṛsimha found from Suhania, now in the collection of the Gwalior Museum, is similar in the iconographical details to the one described above. He holds in one of his surviving upper hands the conch and the front two hands are tearing the abdomen of the demon, who is

1. Agni Purāṇa, 49, 17.

2. Banerji R.D., Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture. Pl. XLVI c.

lying on his folded right knee. The folded right leg of the god is supported by a serpent-hood.

A panel found at Manora, a village in the Kaimur range in Central India, depicts in a vivid manner the fight between the god and the demon¹. The right foot of the god is placed on the head of a prostrate demon holding probably a mace in his hand. The left leg is interlocked with the right leg of Hiranyakasipu who stands to the left of the god. The front left hand of Nṛsimha is tearing open the bosom of the demon while his front right hand is in the act of striking him. He holds the disc and the conch in his two upper hands. This is a very striking image of the 8th century showing the god and the demon in combat.

There are a large number of four-handed images of Nṛsimha found in different parts of Northern India. As they are iconographically almost the same, it is not necessary to describe them here in detail. The Khajuraho Museum has an image of the four-handed Nṛsimha in its collection with two upper hands in the abhaya-mudrā and the front two hands engaged in destroying the demon as usual. He does not hold any emblem in his hand. (D.G.A. No. 1666/60).

1. Khare G.H., Mūrti Vijnāna, Poona, 1939. Pl. X.

Also see

Banerjee R.D., ASIAR, 1921-22. p. 70.

III

The six-handed variety of Nṛsimha image has not been referred to by any text on iconography, so far as is known to us. The Rājiva locana temple at Rajim in the Madhya Pradesh, contains a six-handed image of Nṛsimha, datable to the 7th century. Here Nṛsimha is standing on a demon lying prostrate holding a sword in his hand. The right leg of the god is placed on the hips and the left leg is on the tilted head of the demon. He is strangling Hiranyakaśipu who is resting on his folded leg. The two front hands are proceeding to tear his entrails. The two upper hands are completely mutilated. Hiranyakaśipu wears long moustaches and holds a sword in his right hand¹.

There is another such image of Nṛsimha in the collection of the Dacca Museum. The two natural hands are engaged in tearing open the entrails of the demon, the lower two hands hold tightly the hair and the legs of the demon and the upper two hands hold the attributes which are not clearly visible. The bent left leg of the god is crushing the chest of another recumbent demon. A remarkable feature of this image is that the sculptor has tried to narrate the myth of Nṛsimha in stone and so we find to the right of the main figure a small pillar surmounted by a lion head, symbolically representing the sudden appearance of the god from the pillar.²

1. Dik^{sh}it M.G., Sirpur and Rajim Temples. Pl. 74-75.

2. Bhattasali N.K., Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum. Pl. XXXVII b.

A similar image, with a very detailed representation of the whole episode has been found in Birbhum.¹ On both the sides of the main figure are carved scenes depicting the earlier part of the legend. To the right is a figure in añjali-mudrā facing an enthroned person, presumably Hiranyakaśipu and his son Prahlāda. To the left of the main figure is seen Hiranyakaśipu kicking the pillar of his hall, thus challenging Prahlāda to prove the presence of his god there. It also shows the appearance of the Man-lion from it. The miniature Man-lion at the top of the pillar has raised his hands in the abhaya-mudrā to offer protection to Prahlāda. The six-handed Nṛsimha in the centre has lost three of his hands. The front two hands are taking out the entrails of the recumbent demon on his lap who is holding the khadga in his hand. The upper right hand seems to have been in the abhaya-mudrā. The bent left leg of the god is trampling a prostrate demon.

An image found at Vikrampur is another such representation of Nṛsimha. He is standing on a recumbent demon on the lotus pedestal. He holds the demon Hiranyakaśipu by his hair and the leg, the two front hands are occupied in tearing out the entrails of the demon. The upper right hand is probably in abhaya-mudrā and the upper left one in the tarjani-mudrā. Below the lotus seat is carved the figure

1. Dixit K.N., ASIAR, 1921-22. p. 80. Pl. XXVIII b.
Banerjee R.D., op. cit., Pl. XLVI b.

of Hiranyakaśipu kicking the pillar out of which emerges the small figure of Nṛsimha. To the right of the pillar stands Prahlāda in worshipful attitude. At the end, on the right side of the pedestal, appears Garuḍa with folded hands.¹

The Allahabad Museum also has two six-handed images of Nṛsimha, one of them from Uchandi is datable to the 7th century. But these images are very mutilated and the iconographical details are not clear.

A Nṛsimha image from Devagana near Abu is a fine specimen of 9th century workmanship. Hiranyakaśipu is lying on the folded right leg of the god who tears asunder the entrails with his front two hands. One of his left hands is in the tarjani-mudrā and the rest are broken. To the right of the main figure appear two demons, near his left leg appear other two defeated demons one recumbent on the ground and the other seated, while a demon holding the sword in his hand is standing there. The folded right leg of the god is placed on the shoulder of a figure wearing mukuta, with a benign expression on the face. He may be identified as Prahlada revering the god (fig. 36).

A note on the mudrās associated with the Nṛsimha images may not be out of place here. Several images described above

-
1. Banerjee R.D., op. cit., Pl. XLVI a. On the lintel of the Valam temple in Gujarat there is an image of Nṛsimha. The upper left hand is in the abhaya-mudrā and the front two hands are tearing the entrails of the demon, as usual. The rest of the six hands are broken.

show the abhaya-mudrā, obviously indicating protection to Prahlāda threatened by his own father. The tarjanī-mudrā, shown by the Vikrampur and the Devangana images described above, is meant as a threat to the arrogant demon who refuses to accept the omnipresence of the god.

An interesting 9th century image of Nṛsimha from Chamba exhibits two different unidentifiable mudrās. The figure is seated on a simhāsana with both of his legs hanging down. The god wears only a loin-cloth. His two natural hands support his chin and the other two hands are in tripatāka-mudrā, the significance of which is not yet known. A small piece of cloth tied to the figure just below the chest, may have some esoteric significance or maybe a yoga paṭṭa. On the pedestal are carved to miniature figures of the Man-lion. It is a very forceful representation of the Man-lion with rolling eyes, open mouth, and expanded nostrils. His thick mane is spread over his shoulders. It is remarkable that the god does not hold any of the Vaiṣṇava āyudhas¹.

The six-handed variety of Nṛsimha was evidently very popular in mediaeval northern India. It does not differ very much from the four-handed variety because the purpose of the two additional hands is merely to hold the demon, who is lying on his lap, by his hair and leg. It is also

1. Goetz Hermann, Early Wooden Temples of Chamba.
p. 83. Pl. IV.

noteworthy that the eastern Indian variety has a peculiarity of its own. The eastern sculptors have a tendency to narrate the legend of Nṛsimha in the same panel, and the method is to carve the important incidents of the myth by the side of the main figure or below on the pedestal, as in the Trivikrama images.

IV

The eight-handed variety of Nṛsimha is described in some Sanskrit texts besides the Matsya Purāṇa and the Vaikhānasāgama. The Silparatna gives a detailed description of the images of Nṛsimha. According to it, the "image of Nṛsimha must have a fierce lion-face and eight hands striking the demon with his finger nails lying on his lap holding a sword and shield, pulling out the entrails of the demon with two hands. The remaining right hands should hold the disc and the lotus, and the left hands the mace and the conch."¹

The Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa also gives a similar account of the Nṛsimha image but instead of four āyudhas the god is said to hold only two; the remaining hands are occupied in killing and striking the demon.²

1. Silparatna, Uttara bhāga, Adh. 23, 8.

2. Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa, V, 77-84.

The eight-handed images of Nṛsimha are not as numerous as the four- and the six-handed ones. An eight-handed image lying in the verandah of the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Sirpur, belongs to the seventh century. In this image, the upper two pairs of his hands are in the abhaya-mudrā and the two front hands are engaged in the act of destroying the demon who is hanging upside down between the legs of the god. The lower right hand is seizing the hand of the demon while the lower left hand is broken. His hands are thrown round the legs of the god. It is a forceful and vigorous representation of the god (fig. 37).

The excavations at Amb in the Punjab have brought to light an image of Nṛsimha, much mutilated and of crude workmanship.¹ The upper right hand of the god is in the abhaya-mudrā, the second right is in the tarjani-mudrā, the third is holding the hair knot of the demon recumbent on his right leg and the fourth one is tearing open his entrails. The left side has preserved only two hands engaged in holding and attacking the demon.

The Lucknow Museum has a beautiful image of the eight-handed Nṛsimha which is interesting from the iconographical point of view. The execution of the elaborate iconographical details, and its superb artistic quality class it among one

1. Archaeological Survey Report, Northern Circle, 1913-21. Hindu and Buddhist Monuments. Pl. VII, 2837.

of the most interesting images of Nṛsimha, datable to the 9th century. The two upper hands hold the nāgapāśa. Together with the end of the nāgapāśa the upper left hand also holds a shield. The second pair of hands holds the mace and the disc; the third pair is broken and the fourth pair is engaged in tearing out the entrails of the demon lying on the folded right leg of the god. Below this is represented a defeated demon fallen on the ground. The goddess, with a lotus in her right hand, to the right of the main figure, is probably Lakṣmī. A (attendant) figure to his left is holding a snake in his hand. Brahmā and Śiva are carved above on the panel (fig. 38).

The presence of the nāgapāśa obviously points to Śaivite or Tantric influence on the Nṛsimha cult. Nṛsimha with the pāśa in his hand is described by the latter texts like the Pārameśvara Samhitā.¹ It prescribes the lotus, the goad, the pestle, the disc, the conch, the bow and the arrow, the noose and the mace in the hands of Nṛsimha.

Another image holding the pāśa is in the collection of the Gwalior Museum. The four-handed god holds in his upper

1.

अन्यथाष्टभुजो धत्ते मुख्यदत्ताकरादिकैः ।

पद्माङ्कुशौ च मुसलं चक्रमत्युग्रतेजसम् ॥

शंखं च सशरं चापं पाशं कौमोदकीं क्रमात् ।

Pārameśvara Samhitā, Adh. 23. 48-49.

(ed. Shri Govindacharya, Tiruchi, 1953).

two hands the pāśa.

The Nṛsimha image is sometimes even endowed with multiple hands. The ceiling of the Jain temple of Vimalavasah at Abu, contains a twelve-handed Nṛsimha with his legs intertwined tightly with the legs of the defeated Hiranyakasipu. The palm of the upper right hand of the god is stretched out near his forehead as if in the abhaya-mudrā. The second right hand is also in the abhaya-mudrā, the third hand is in the act of tearing open the bosom of the demon, the fourth is holding a mace, the fifth is piercing the abdomen of the demon and the sixth is holding his leg. On the left side, the first two of the hands are broken, the third is proceeding to attack the demon, the fourth and the fifth hold the disc and an indistinct object and the sixth is tearing open the entrails of the demon. The god's rolling eyes, and lolling tongue give him a fierce look.¹ This image points to the adoption of Hindu gods in the Jain mythology.

Another such multi-handed image is in the Lakṣmana temple at Khajuraho.² The god is shown tearing off the demon lying on his lap as usual. Excepting the front two hands all the rest are broken.

1. Dave K.B., Gujarātnu Mūrtividhān, Pl. 17.

2. Agrawal Urmila, Khajuraho Sculptures and their Significance. p. 37. Pl. XII.

The elaboration of the iconography of Nṛsimha and his association with Śaivite emblems testify to the impact of Tantrism on the Nṛsimha cult towards the 9th century. His most important function recedes into the background and the object of the worshipper is to invoke him as a powerful god with multiple hands, and a terrific face. He ceased to be merely an incarnation of Viṣṇu and attained the position of a deity with Tantric significance. The intention behind this kind of worship was generally to achieve a particular object, mostly a harming one like the destruction of the enemy or the death of a person not in favour. The dhyānas are more like charms denoting some esoteric significance than merely means of emphasising a simple act of worship.

We may here refer to some of the dhyānas of Nṛsimha with the multiple hands and emblems, though they are of a later date. In the Pārameśvara Samhitā he is described as Sundarśana Nṛsimha.¹ "He has reddish tawny eyes and hair, red garments,

-
1. मुख्यदिग्गहास्तादि मुख्यवामकरावधि ॥
 द्विरष्टबाहुभिर्धत्ते प्रादक्षिण्यक्रमेण तु ।
 शक्तिं खड्गं तथा चाग्निं मङ्कुशं दण्डकुन्तिके ॥
 परशुं च सङ्खारं दं च सशरं धनुः ।
 पाशं हलं ततो वज्रं गदां च मुसलं तथा ॥
 त्रिशूलमेतान्यस्त्राणि प्रत्येकं वीर्यवन्ति च ।

Pārameśvara Samhitā, kriyā kāṇḍa,
Adh. 23. 45-47.

fierce face and tusks, curved eyebrows and a flamboyant forehead, and rolling eyes. He stands in pratyaliḍha posture. He holds in his sixteen hands, starting from the first right, javelin, sword, fire-bowl, goad, shaft, spear, battle-axe, disc, bow with arrow, noose, ploughshare, thunderbolt, mace, pestle and trident.

He is endowed with thirty-two hands by the Nāradiya Mahā Purāṇa.¹ In the right hands there are discus, lotus, battle-axe, noose, ploughshare, pestle, goad, pattisa (a weapon with three points), bhindipāla (short javelin), sword, club, and tomara, and one is in the abhaya-mudrā. In the left hands there are conch-shell, shield, noose, śūla, fire-pot, spear, kundika, kārmuka (a bowl-shaped instrument), tarjanī-mudrā, mace, damaru, and śūrpa (winnowing basket), and one is in the varada-mudrā. He strikes the demon on his head with two hands and with the other two he holds up his entrails; another pair is engaged in tearing open his bosom.

Such images are found only in the later period, and that too primarily in south India.

V

Some of the texts describe Nṛsimha seated with Lakṣmī in his lap. The Skanda Purāṇa says that Nṛsimha has a calm

1. Nāradiya Mahā Purāṇa, Pūrva khanda, Adh. 71, 62-66.

appearance when he is embracing Lakṣmī. He holds the discus and bow and his eyes are like the sun and the moon. His hands are extended to the knees and he is seated on a lotus of thirty-two petals.¹

Mahā

The Nāradiya Purāṇa portrays rather the fierce aspect of Lakṣmī-Nṛsimha. According to it, Lakṣmī, holding a lotus in her hand, is embraced by Nṛsimha. He wears a garland of entrails, and the yajñopavīta made of a serpent. He has five faces adorned with the moon-crest, one of them being green; each face has three eyes. Ten hands forming a circle hold the rosary, mace, lotus, conch-shell, bow, pestle, discus, sword and arrow.²

The images of Lakṣmī-Nṛsimha are not to be found before the thirteenth century. A shrine dedicated to Nṛsimha in the Jagannāthpuri temple, contains a colossal image of Lakṣmī-Nṛsimha.

The survey of Nṛsimha images in the foregoing pages shows that Nṛsimha was regarded as one of the most favourite incarnations of Viṣṇu in almost all the parts of Northern India. It must have been greatly patronized in the Gupta period, and even after that Nṛsimha continued to exert

-
1. Skanda Purāṇa, Vaiṣṇava khanda, Purusottama Mahātmya.
Adh. 28, 27-29.
 2. Nāradiya Mahāpurāṇa, Pūrva Khanda, Adh. 71, 51-55.

considerable influence in the religious life of the people. The early images of Nṛsimha are two-handed, but as the cult expanded its iconography became complex, growing into multiple hands. The demon is associated with him regularly in the mediaeval period. Nṛsimha worship, as is evident from his iconography, is influenced by Tantrism. He occupies the position of a cult deity rather than remaining merely an incarnation of Viṣṇu.

Nṛ^āsimhī, the female counterpart of Nṛsimha does not seem to have attracted the attention of the devotees much, but is described in detail in the Jayākhyā Samhitā.¹ She is to be made like Nṛsimha. She is not included in the known list of the Saptamātrikas like Vārāhi.

1. Jayākhyā Samhitā, XXIX, 15-20.

VĀMANA-TRIVIKRAMA

It is an established fact that the Vāmana myth has its germ in the "three steps" of Viṣṇu referred to in the Rig-veda¹. Viṣṇu's feat of traversing the universe with his three steps is explicitly alluded to in the Rig-veda I, 22, 17:

इदं विष्णुर्विक्रमे त्रेधानि दधे पदम् । समूहस्य पांसुरे ॥
त्रीणि पदा विक्रमे विष्णुर्गोपा अदाभ्यः । अतो धर्माणि धारयन् ॥

Griffith translates it as follows:

"Through all this (world) strode Viṣṇu, thrice his foot he planted and the whole was gathered in his foot-steps dust."

There is hardly any controversy about the interpretation of the three steps of Viṣṇu referred to above. His three steps could represent, as indicated by Aurnavābha² and accepted by several scholars, the rising, the mid-day and the setting sun. Macdonell, agreeing with Bargaine, interprets the three steps "as the course of the solar deity through the three divisions of the universe."³

-
1. Macdonell A.A., Vedic Mythology, p. 39.
see also Gonda, Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism. p. 145.
 2. Yāska, Niruktam, 12, 19. Commentary by Aurnavābha.
 3. Macdonell A.A., op. cit., p. 38.

"Within his three steps that are full of honey all beings dwell."¹

This feat of Viṣṇu is sometimes ascribed to his desire to be benovolent to men. He is said to have traversed the earthly spaces for men in distress². "He who for man's behoof in his affection thrice measured out the earthly regions, Viṣṇu ---."

R.V., VI, 49, 13.

At another place, Viṣṇu is applauded for traversing the earth to bestow it on men for inhabiting³.

"Over this earth with mighty step strode Viṣṇu, ready to give it for home to Manu. In him the humble people trust for safety; the nobly born hath made them spacious dwelling."

R.V., VII, 100, 4.

A very similar idea is expressed in a hymn where he is said to have taken vast strides with Indra and stretched

1. यस्य त्रीं पूर्णां मधुना पदान्यक्षयिमाणा स्वधया मदन्ति ।
य उ त्रिधातु पृथिवीमुत दामेको दाधार भुवनानि विश्वा ॥

R.V., I, 154, 4.

2. यो रजांसि विममे पार्थिवानि त्रिष्विद्विष्णुर्मनवे बाधिताय ।
तस्य ते शर्मन्नुपदधमाने रायामदेम तन्वा ३ तना च ॥

R.V., VI, 49, 13.

3. विचक्रमे पृथिवीमेण स्तां क्षत्राय विष्णुर्मनुषे दशस्यन् ।
ध्रुवासो अस्य कीरयो जनास उरुदिति सुजनिमाचकार ॥

R.V., VII, 100, 4.

out the world for our existence¹.

We may well ascribe the origin of the Vāmana-Trivikrama myth to this particular function of Viṣṇu. Not only that, Dr. V.S. Agrawal² traces the reference to the Vāmana Viṣṇu conception to a reference where "Vāmana is conceived as a yuvā kumāra, or a young hero of beautiful form and Virāṭa Viṣṇu as a giant form."

R.V., I, 155, 6.

Later on with the legendary introduction of the fight between Devas and Dānavas as well as the supremacy of the Asura king Bali, the myth of Viṣṇu rescuing the world from the Asura domination, was woven round this very theme.

A remarkable point in the evolution of the basic concept of avatāra is its association with Viṣṇu right from its initial stages. Unlike other avatāras, Vāmana is not a separate entity later on synthesized with Viṣṇu, but it represents the essential and original aspect of the God.

The development of the myth starts from the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa³. The gods and the Asuras were contending for superiority, and the Asuras thought that they were the masters of the world. Thereupon, they got together and

1. R.V., VI, 69, 5.

2. Agrawal V.S., op. cit., p. 61.

3. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, I, 2, 5.

decided to divide the world amongst themselves. The gods, anxious to have their own share, rushed to the demons accompanied by Viṣṇu in the form of Sacrifice. The Asuras replied, "as much as this Viṣṇu lies upon, and no more, we give you."

Now, Viṣṇu was a dwarf, hence the gods laid him on all the three directions and thus obtained the entire earth.

A similar legend is related in the Taittirīya Samhitā¹ and the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa². In the earlier versions of the story, referred to above, Viṣṇu, instead of measuring the world with the three steps, extends his steps to the three directions to obtain the possession of the entire earth.

The more evolved form of the myth of king Bali and Vāmana is, for the first time referred to in the Rāmāyana³. Viṣṇu assumed the form of a dwarf in order to subdue the

1. Taittirīya Samhitā, II, 1, 3.

2. Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, I, 6, 1.

3.

वैरोचनिमुपागम्य त्रीन याचत् पदद्वयम् ।

लब्ध्वा च त्रीन् पदान् विष्णुः कृत्वा रूपमथाद्भुतम् ॥

त्रिभिः क्रमेस्तथा लोकानाजहार त्रिविक्रमः ।

एकेन हि पदा कृत्स्नां पृथिवीं सोऽध्यतिष्ठति ॥

द्वितीयेनाव्ययं व्योमं चां तृतीयेन राधव ।

तं च बद्धाञ्जलिं कृत्वा पातालतलवासिनम् ॥

Rāmāyana, I, 27, 12-14.

pride of the Asura king Bali. He approached him at the time when he was performing a sacrifice and asked for the gift of the land measuring the size of his three steps. When granted the boon, he enlarged himself into a wonderfully giant form and measured the entire earth with his three steps. King Bali was finally sent to rule the nether world.

The legend of the Vāmana incarnation is related in many Purāṇas, the contents being almost similar in all of them¹. It says that there ensued a fight between the Devas and the Asuras. Bali, the king of the Asuras extended his authority over the three worlds inflicting an overall defeat on the gods. Viṣṇu, at the request of the gods to restore them their former power, assumed the form of a dwarf and approached king Bali at the time of the sacrifice. He asked Bali to give him as much space as could be measured by his three footsteps. King Bali with all his generosity, agreed to offer him that boon inspite of all the warnings by his guru Śukrācārya. Viṣṇu, then enlarged himself to such great dimensions that he covered the three worlds with his three steps. King Bali was offered the sovereignty of Pātāla and ultimately the gods could regain their position.

-
1. Harivamśa Purāṇa, III, 58-68; Matsya Purāṇa, adh. 161-167; Agni Purāṇa, adh. 5; Padma Purāṇa, adh. 266-67; Vāmana Purāṇa, adh. 23-31.

The iconographical representation of Viṣṇu in this avatāra is mainly done in two ways. He is either to be sculptured as Vāmana or dwarf, depicting the earlier part of the story, or as Trivikrama - the dwarf grown into a gigantic stature measuring the three worlds with his three strides.

I

The iconography of the Vāmana or the dwarfish form is simple but the descriptions given in the Sanskrit texts are varied. The image of Vāmana shows him either as a mendicant or a Brahmacārin. The only emblem to be held by Vāmana according to the Viṣṇudharmottaram is the staff. "The god Vāmana should have crooked limbs and a fat body. He carries the staff and is prepared for studies. His colour should be dark green like the dūrvā grass and he should wear an antelope skin".¹

The Agni Purāṇa prescribes the umbrella and the staff as his emblems, if the figure of Vāmana is two-handed.²

-
1. कर्तव्यो वामनो देवः संकटेऽर्त्रिपर्वभिः ।
पीनगात्रश्च कर्तव्यो दण्डी चाध्ययनोद्यतः ॥

Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 85, 549.

2. कूट्रीदण्डी वामनः स्यादथवा स्याच्छुभ्रजः ।
Agni Purāṇa, adh. 49, 5.

The representation of Vāmana in any of these forms is rather rare. It may be noted that Vāmana figures, though not uncommon in the Gupta period, are not as numerous as those of the Varāha and Nṛsimha.

A square stone, in the collection of the Allahabad Museum, contains a figure of Vāmana on a panel on one of its four sides. It is a pot-bellied dwarfish figure, wearing a loin-cloth reaching upto his knees. His hair, untied, is hanging down on his shoulders. His right hand is in the varada-mudrā, with an akṣamālā, whereas the left hand holds a kamaṇḍalu. The legs of this figure are too small in proportion to the whole body. The figure is a specimen of the Gupta art and is one of the earliest images of Vāmana so far found (fig. 39). A similar figure of Vāmana is in the Bharat Kala Bhavan, represented on one side of a square stone, holding the kamaṇḍalu in one hand and the akṣamālā in the other.

Various later texts have described the figure of Vāmana holding the kamaṇḍalu and the umbrella in his hands. The Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa specially attributes the figure of Vāmana with the śikhā and the yajñopavīta - the indication of a bramacārin or a mendicant. He should hold the umbrella and the kamaṇḍalu in his hands¹.

1. कृष्णाजिनोपवीतः स्याच्छ्री धृतकमण्डलु ।

कुण्डली शिखियायुक्तः कुब्जाकारो मनोहरः ॥

Devatāmūrtiprakaraṇa, V, 71.

also compare,
Mānasollāsa, III, 1, 697-698. Gaekwad Oriental Series,
Śilparatna, 25, 111, 112. Baroda, 1939.

The figure of Vāmana holding the umbrella and the kamandalu is invariably seen in the Daśāvatāra panels, but his separate representation in this form is not known, even though many texts on iconography have referred to it.

A panel projecting in the centre of the doorway of the Daśāvatāra temple at Deogarh, represents a very peculiar image of Vāmana. The panel contains an image of Viṣṇu seated on a serpent in the centre. To his right is a small figure holding an umbrella in his right hand and in his left hand is supposedly in the varada-mudrā¹. It might represent Lord Viṣṇu revered and adored by his own incarnational form. An exactly similar representation of Vāmana is found to our great surprise, at the Udayagiri caves at Bhubaneshwar². The figure of Vāmana in this panel is to the left of Viṣṇu rather than to the right.

The image of Vāmana could also be four-handed, but the emblems in his hands differ according to different texts.

The Bhāgavata Purāṇa gives quite a detailed description of the image. The emblems to be held by the deity are the umbrella, the staff (danda), and the kamandalu full of

-
1. Vats M.S., The Gupta Temple at Deogarh. MASI No. 70, p. 12. Pl. IX a.
 2. Daniélou Alain, Hindu Polytheism. Pl.XI.

water in his three hands, while the fourth hand is in the abhaya-mudrā. He wears the antelope skin, the yajñopavīta, etc.¹

Sometimes he holds the emblems which are in no way relevant to the role he plays as an avatāra. For instance, according to the Paurāṇakarma, he should hold the sārṅga, the bow and the arrow in his three hands. The emblem to be held in the fourth hand is not mentioned².

The Gāndharva Tantra imagines the image of Vāmana just like that of ordinary Viṣṇu images, holding the peculiar emblems of Viṣṇu.

"Baṭuka (Vāmana) has lotus-like eyes and fair golden colour. He should hold in his four hands the mace, the conch, the lotus and the disc³."

A number of the four-handed mediaeval images of

1. कृत्रं सदण्डं सजलं कमण्डलुं -

विवेश बिभ्रद्युमेधवाहम् ॥

मौञ्ज्या मेखलयावीतमुपवीत जिनोत्तरम् ।

जटिलं वामनं विप्र मायामाणवकं हरिम् ॥

Bhāgavata Purāṇa, VIII, 18, 23-24.

2. नमः शार्ङ्गधनुर्बाण पाणये वामनाय च ।

Paurāṇakarma, (Jagat Samachar Press, Thana), III, 3.

3. बटुकः कमलाक्षस्तु स्वर्णगौर चतुर्भुजः ।

गदां च पद्मं च चक्रं चापि दधत्करे ॥

Gāndharva Tantra,

Kak & Shastri, Srinagar, 1934. 19, 6-7.

Vāmana holding the emblems of Viṣṇu are available. It deserves attention that the early images of Vāmana, like the description given in the early texts cited above, are invariably two-handed¹.

A very significant point to be noted here is the fact that side by side with these Vāmana images there is to be found one of the series of twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu, (also designated as Vāmana) holding his four peculiar emblems. This poses the question whether such images should be considered as the representation of the Vāmana avatāra of Viṣṇu or as one of his caturvimsati forms.

If we examine such images in detail, we notice that the execution of the figure of any of the twenty-four forms of Viṣṇu is always proportionate, every limb being in equal proportion to the whole body. Whereas the figures of Vāmana show a deliberate deformation of the body, particularly the legs and the belly. It is always a pot-bellied figure with rather short legs indicating a dwarf. This is the only discriminating point to decide whether the image is that of a Vāmana incarnation or of the twenty-four forms

1. See Viṣṇudharmottaram, Agni Purāṇa, on p. 198 above.

Also compare:

--- द्विभुजं हृदयद्वयं कौपीनवाससम् शिखापुस्तकमेखलोपवीत -
कृष्णाजिनसमायुक्तं पवित्रपाणिनं बालरूपिणं ----- ॥

Vaikhānasāgama, Pātala 58,
p. 199.

of Viṣṇu. A striking point here is the position of emblems held by the image, which are exactly in compliance with the positions of the emblems prescribed for the Vāmana form of Viṣṇu by several texts¹. According to the Padma purāṇa and the Rūpamaṇḍana it should hold, starting from the lower right, the lotus or the rosary, the mace, the disc and the conch in its four hands. The order of āyudhas held by the Vāmana avatāra of Viṣṇu is also the same, as will be shown below. Hence, it may safely be concluded that such images show an attempt to synthesize the two aspects of Viṣṇu viz. the vyūha and the vibhāva. It is just the fancy of the sculptors of the mediaeval period who tried to combine the two aspects of the god in one image, because no such representation of Vāmana has come to light before the mediaeval period.

A beautiful four-handed image of Vāmana, pot-bellied standing on a lotus pedestal, datable to the 8th century A.D., is preserved in the collection of the Bharata Kala Bhavana, Banaras², the lower right hand is in the varada-mudrā, the rest of the hands hold the mace, the disc and the conch. Śrīdevī and Sarasvatī flank him and below on the pedestal are represented the devotees with folded hands.

1. See Appendix I.

2. Agrawal V.S., op. cit., Pl. I, facing p. 1.

A very similar image from Dinapur, is now in the collection of the Asutosh Museum (No. 5621). A plump small figure holding the lotus in the varada-mudrā, the mace, the disc and the conch, stands on lotus pedestal flanked by Śrī and Sarasvatī¹.

The Vāmana figure flanked by the goddesses Śrī and Sarasvatī is described in the Kālikāpurāṇa. It says: "Fair like the moon, wearing yellow garments, standing on Garuda, the four-handed god holds in his upper right hand the mace, in the lower right hand the pot of water, in the upper left hand the flaming disc, and in the lower left the conch. His chest is marked with Śrīvatsa and the kaustubha. He has on his left side the quiver full of arrows, and on his right side the Nandaka sword. He is adorned with a tiara, earrings and vanamālā reaching upto his knees. To his right side stands Śrī and to his left Sarasvatī."

So far no image of Vāmana is carrying the quiver is available, but an image with the Nandaka sword attached to the belt has come to light from Narwar, datable to the 11th century A.D. now in the Gwalior Museum. The small figure of Vāmana is carrying the mace, the disc and the conch in his three hands, the fourth being on varada-mudrā. The long ear-lobes and the curly hair remind

-
1. Banerjee J.N., The Development of Hindu Iconography. Pl. XXIII, 1.
 2. Kālikāpurāṇa, Venkatesvara Press, Bombay, 1908. 83, 16-21.
 3. Rūpamandana also prescribes a water pot in his hand.

one of the Buddha figures. A donor couple, devotees and Āyudha-puruṣas flank the central figure. Around the panel are depicted the avatāras of Viṣṇu, also Brahmā and Śiva, and on the top is an unidentified figure in dhyāna-mudrā¹.

At times, the hair of Vāmana in this curls with a top knot, indicating him to be a mendicant.

The Sanskrit Vidyapith, Varanasi, has a fine image with curly hair and the top-knot or uṣṇīṣa. This image datable to the 10th century A.D. holds in his upper two hands the mace and the disc, the lower two hands are mutilated. On either side appear much mutilated Āyudha puruṣas. (fig. 40).

The Vāmana temple at Khajuraho contains a similar figure published by Urmila Agrawal².

In the Jhalawar Museum (No. 12) and the Jaipur Museum (No. 11201) also similar images of Vāmana are exhibited.

Later Tantric text, like Meru Tantra, describe a very peculiar form of Vāmana, termed Dadhi Vāmana. The text prescribes that Vāmana should carry pots full of curds and water in his hands. The idea behind this form seems to

-
1. Annual Administration Report of the Archaeological Department, Gwalior, 1936. Pl. VI a.
 2. Agrawal Urmila, Khajuraho Sculptures and their Significance. Pl. 14.

indicate Vāmana symbolising the creative principle of life as represented by the water and curd. According to the same text, Vāmana should be meditated upon as standing under the golden umbrella flanked by the goddesses Śrī and Bhūmi. He should hold in his left hand a golden pot containing the curd-rice and in his right hand a golden pot filled with water¹. The description of Vāmana in the Śāradātilaka is almost the same².

So far no such image of Vāmana has come to light.

II

The mythology of the Vāmana incarnation of Viṣṇu has been more frequently represented as Trivikrama when Viṣṇu suddenly grew into the Virāṭa form from the dwarf form, to measure the whole world.

The image to be executed according to the Viṣṇu-dharmottaram is very peculiar. It says:

"The image of Trivikrama should be like the cloud laden with water, holding (of dark shade) and in his eight hands he holds the staff, the noose, the conch, the disc, the mace and the lotus. With his other two

1.

ज्वलन्मयूखकनकच्छत्राद्यः पुण्डरीकम् ।

पूर्णचन्द्रनिभं ध्यायेच्छ्रीधूम्याश्लिष्ट पार्श्वकम् ॥

दध्यन्नं वामहस्तेन स्वर्णस्य चणकं दधत् ॥

Meru Tantra, 26, 341-342.

2. Śāradātilaka, 15, 56-60. [(ed.) Pandit M.J.B., Benaras, 1934.

hands he should blow the conch¹."

The Matsya Purāṇa², the Mānasollasa³ etc. do not throw much light on the iconography of the Trivikrama image, hence for the most part we have to rely on the Vaikhānasāgama and the Atri Samhitā.

The Vaikhānasāgama⁴ divides the image of Trivikrama

1.

दूर्वाश्यामश्च कर्तव्यः कृष्णाजिनधरस्तथा ।

सजलाब्जदसंकाशस्तथा कार्यस्त्रिविक्रमः ॥

दण्डपाशधरः कार्यः शंखसञ्चुम्बिताधरः ।

शंखचक्रगदा (पद्माः) कार्यास्तस्य स्वरूपिणः ॥

Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 85, 55-56.

2. Matsya Purāṇa, 260, 36-38.

3. Mānasollasa, III, 1, 712-714.

4. त्रिविक्रमं त्रिधा प्रोक्तं लोके त्रिपदविन्यासात् भूलोकात् क्रमेण
ललाटसीमान्तमुद्धृतमेतैर्यथेष्टानि रूपं निश्चित्य ----- देवं
चतुर्बाहुमष्टभुजं वाष्टभुजं चेद् दक्षिणे चक्रासिशक्तिधरं वामे
खेटकशार्ङ्गहस्तमुत्तमधरं मेघमष्टभुजं चतुर्भुजो दक्षिणे चक्रं वामे
शंखं तद्विपरितं स्ववामपादं दक्षिणं स्थितं वामं प्रसारितं
दक्षिणमुत्तमकरं वामप्रसारितपादेन सह प्रसारितं श्यामामं
रक्ताम्बरधरं सर्वाभरणभूषितं -----

Vaikhānasāgama, Pātala 58, p. 200.

into three varieties according to the level of the upraised left foot. It should either be to the level of the right knee, to the navel or to the forehead, intended to represent him in the act of striding over the three worlds. It should have either four or eight hands. If he is four-armed, one of the right hands holds the conch, and one of the left hands holds the disc. One of the right hands should be held up with the palm upwards, and the other left hand should be stretched out parallel to the uplifted leg.

If the image is eight-handed, then five of his hands should carry the conch, the disc, the mace, the bow and the plough and the others carry the symbols of the four-handed image. His right leg should be firmly planted upon the earth and the left should be used in taking the stride. Indra should be shown to be holding an umbrella over Trivikrama's head. Varuṇa, Vāyu, Sūrya and Candrar attend on him with fly-whisk. Brahmā should be shown washing the uplifted leg of Trivikrama. Śiva with folded hands should be sculptured on the panel. Below his left leg is represented the dwarfish figure of Vāmana with an umbrella in his hands, ready to receive the grant of his wish from king Bali who stands opposite to him holding a water vessel indicating that he is ready to pour the sacred water as an act of final dedication. Śukrāchārya, his guru, should also be present there.

From the Katra Kesavadev at Mathura has come a panel showing the Trivikrama incarnation of Viṣṇu (assignable to

the Gupta Period), now preserved in the Mathura Museum (No. 2664)¹. It is very difficult to describe the image in detail because the panel is in a badly mutilated condition. A figure is seen with his left leg stretched aloft at the end of which is seen a demon head². The demon head typifies the Brahmāṇḍa in the opinion of Dr. V. S. Agrawal.

A panel on the Daśāvatāra temple at Deogarh, in all probability represents the Trivikrama. To the right is a figure seated on a raised platform, while on the left is another figure with the right foot firmly planted on the ground and the left foot aslant. Between them is the bust of a young ascetic. The person on the throne raising his right hand in the abhaya-mudrā is evidently Bali approached by Vāmana for the gift. The gift being granted, he turned himself into a gigantic figure seen on the left side of the panel³.

A very interesting image of Trivikrama has been found from Rajim, in the Raipur district, Madhya Pradesh. The

-
1. Diskalkar D.B., Some Brahmanical Sculptures in the Mathura Museum. JUPHS, Vol. V, Part I, Jan. '36. p. 25. Pl. VI.
 2. Agrawal V.S., Brahmanical Images in Mathura. JISOA, Vol. V, 1937. p. 124.
 3. Vats M. S., op. cit., p. 20. Pl. XIXb.

four-handed god holds in his upper two hands the disc and the conch. The lower right hand is in the kathihasta-mudrā. He is shown to be crushing the demon head with his lower left hand and also by his vigorously outstretched left leg. Below the left leg is represented the serpent Śeṣa, seated in human form on his own coils with his hands in the añjali-mudrā. No other accessory figure attends the deity. This figure dates back to the early 7th century¹.

There are two fine Pala specimens of the Trivikrama incarnation in the collection of the Indian Museum, Calcutta. One of them (M. No. A 25179), reproduced by Banerji R.D., represents the whole episode in its minutest details². The god stands with his right leg firmly planted on the pedestal and the left leg raised upto the waist. His upper two hands hold the mace and the disc, the lower right hand near his waist holds the lotus and the mutilated left hand probably held the conch. Below on his right side is the goddess Śrī. To the left, under his left leg is seen Vāmana holding an umbrella in his hand. The king holds a water-pot in his right hand as if pouring the sacrificial water symbolising his readiness to offer the gift to Vāmana.

-
1. Rao T.A.G., Elements of Hindu Iconography, Vol. I. Part I. Pl. XLVIII.
 2. Banerji R.D., Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture. Pl. XLVII. 6.

This scene depicts the earlier part of the legend when Vāmana approached the king at the time of sacrifice. As soon as the king gave him the gift by symbolically pouring water he assumed the Virāṭa or gigantic form depicted in the main sculpture. It is a vivid execution of the particular scene described in the Hari-vamśa, in the line:

तोये तु पतिते हस्ते वामनो भूदवामनः ।

III, 71, 43.

There are the queen and other attendants standing by the side of the king. On the pedestal below is represented a horse tied to the yūpa, indicating the horse sacrifice performed by Bali.

Another image in the same Museum¹, (M. No. A 25187) is almost identical to the one described above.

Trivikrama holds the disc and the mace in his right hands, the conch in the upper left hand and shows the tarjanī-mudrā with his lower left hand, possibly giving a warning or threat to the king. Below the left leg of the god is shown the king seated on the throne, offering his gift to Vāmana.

1. Banerjee R.D., Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture. Pl. XLVIIId.

A peculiar image from Abdullapur, in Bengal, depicts Trivikrama in accompaniment of the consorts of Viṣṇu - Śrī and Sarasvatī. The ornate figure of Trivikrama, holds the mace, the disc and the conch in his hands. The right leg is firmly planted on the lotus pedestal and the left is raised aloft, with the miniature figures of the king and the dwarf below it. On either side of the god appear Śrī and Sarasvatī standing on lotuses.¹

In the group of temples at Osian, near Jodhpur in Rajasthan, are preserved some representations of Trivikrama. One on the outer wall of the Harihara Temple I, shows the four-handed Trivikrama crushing the head of the demon with his left leg raised aloft. Of the four hands, his lower right hand is in the kaṭihasta-mudrā, the upper right holds the mace, the upper left holds the disc and the lower left holds the conch. Below his left leg are the king making his offering, Vāmana with an open umbrella and other attendant figures. A figure, evidently the king, is shown holding the right leg of the god and above him appears a horse symbolising the horse-sacrifice (fig. 41).

-
1. Bhattasali N.K., Iconography of the Buddhist and Brahmanical Images in the Dacca Museum. Pl. XXXVIII.

There is an interesting image of Trivikrama, preserved in the Ajmer Museum. The iconography of the image is almost identical with the ones described above, with the exception that its facial expression is fierce¹.

The eight-handed variety of the Trivikrama image described by the Vaikhānasāgama and the Atri Samhitā rarely finds its sculptural expression.

A fragment of the lintel of a gateway at Pawaya in Gwalior is a very interesting execution of the legend of Vāmana-Trivikrama. The whole panel is divided into three parts. The one on the right represents musicians and dancing girl. The middle part of the panel depicts the harem with ladies on the top rows. On the right side of the lowermost row are two rtvijas performing sacrifice in a Vedi before them. The king and the queen are also seated opposite the vedi. The horse of the Áśvamedha Sacrifice is also tied to a yūpa in front. To the left of the same row is seen the king with the Brahmins offering the boon to Vāmana represented as a dwarf, by pouring water on his hand. The left panel represents the final state of the legend where Vāmana has turned into Trivikrama. Unfortunately, it is broken and only a part has survived. The eight-handed god holds in his right hands the dagger, the disc, the staff (?) and one is placed on the chest. In

1. Dave K.B., Gujarātne Mūrtividhān. p. 201.

the upper left hand he is probably holding the garland, and the rest are broken. He is flanked by two cauri-bearers. On the top on the right side can be seen the sun riding his horses. This panel belonging to the 4th century A.D., is important both from iconographical as well as stylistic point of view. Eight-handed images are very rarely met with in the Gupta period and this is the earliest eight-handed Trivikrama known to us. Stylistically the panel is very similar to the Amaravati sculptures, indicating the possibility of the prevalence of the same school in the Western India also¹.

The Gwalior Museum, however, has one eight-handed Trivikrama image from Ghusai, datable to the 10th century. In the right hands, starting from the top are placed the disc, the lotus, the sword, and the mace. In his left hands in the same order, appear the shield, the bow and the conch, one of the hands being mutilated. The left leg of the god is extended upto his shoulder. Below it are seen the dwarf with an umbrella, the king making the offering and an attendant figure. Near the king stands his guru Sukrāchārya, forbidding him to offer anything to Vamana. (fig.)

1. Annual Administrative Report of the Department of Archaeology, Gwalior State, for the year 1931. Pl. VII, a, b. VIII a.

In a niche of the temple of Modhera in Gujarat also appears an eight-handed image of Trivikrama¹. Only the disc and the mace and the conch in the three of his four right hands are visible; the left ones being completely mutilated nothing could be said about the emblems held by them. Near his right leg is a figure with folded hands, and below his left leg appear Vāmana, Balī and Śukrāchārya as in other images. The left leg of the god ends in the mouth of a demon head.

The image of eight-handed Trivikrama has been found at Kathmandu in Nepal² dated to the 5th century A.D. by Stella Kramrisch. The right hands of the image appear as follows: The upper one is in the abhaya-mudrā; the others hold the disc and the mace, and the last is in kaṭihasta-mudrā. The emblems in the left hand are not clear. Two Nāga figures are clinging to the right leg of the god. Under the outstretched left leg of Trivikrama the king is shown offering something to Vāmana. The queen with folded hands stands by the side of the king.

A unique representation of Trivikrama has come to light from Chamba³, on a panel to the east of the Northern side of the Markulā Devī temple at Lahul. The outstretched left

-
1. Burgess and Cousens, Archaeological Antiquities of Northern Gujarat. Pl. LVI.
 2. Kramrisch Stella, The Art of Nepal, Vienna, 1964. Pl. II.
 3. Goetz Hermann, The Early Wooden Temples of Chamba, Pl. XVI.

leg of the god goes even beyond his head and reaches heaven. The extended toes of his right foot touch the snake god of the nether regions who are represented in the form of a four-handed human being with serpent hoods. The upper right hand of the figure on the right touches the foot of Trivikrama but the emblems in its other hands are not clear. Beneath the left leg of Trivikrama the dwarf is depicted with an umbrella in his left hand standing before king Bali, who is seated on a small throne. Two figures in front of them holding the sword and the shield are probably guards. In the upper region are seen the gods grouped in three rows.

The gods are not easy to identify because the sculptor does not seem to have followed the canon of Hindu iconography. The three-faced figure in the right upper corner must be Brahma, holding the staff, the rosary, the water vessel and seated on two hamsas. Next to him is a figure holding the trident, the rosary and the vessel mounted on two parrots. Another figure on a buffalo carries the skull, sceptre and the flag ~~who~~ may be Yama. The last figure on the ~~same~~ row, equipped with a sword and shield and seated cross-legged on a prostrate Yakṣa, may be Kubera. The only preserved figure in the second row carries the bow, the lotus, the plough and the conch, and may represent Balarāma. The figure in the third row is evidently Sūrya on his chariot. The main figure of Trivikrama holds the lotus, the disc, the mace and the conch in his four hands. The most remarkable feature of this image is the presence of the boar and the lion-face to the left and the right of

the main figure, as in the Vaikunṭha images of Viṣṇu. It is a composite figure combining the Trivikrama, Varāha and the Nṛsimha avatāras of Viṣṇu, and hence is of unique importance in the history of the iconography of Viṣṇu.

Vāmana and Trivikrama images, though scattered all over Northern India do not exhibit many varieties or much evolution and elaboration from the iconographic point of view. The two-handed Vāmana figures are commonly found in the Gupta period, the four-handed variety being an evolution of the mediaeval period. The Vāmana images, but for some minor differences, are almost the same irrespective of their provenance. The Trivikrama images are usually of four-handed variety. This variety of Trivikrama images are more popular in the early states in the north of India, but in the south the eight-handed variety seems to be more common even in the Gupta period. The Trivikrama images from Ellora and the Badami caves are eight-handed¹.

The Vāmana worship must have been in vogue right from the third or the fourth century of the Christian era. The Mahābhārata refers to a tīrtha entitled Vāmana Tīrtha, which must have been a prominent place of pilgrimage. The Vāmana Purāṇa also mentions that the Kota Tīrtha had a shrine of

1. Yasoda Devi, Vamana-Trivikrama, Journal of the Indian History, Dec. 1965. Vol. XLIII. p. 836-845.

Vāmana, somewhere in the Kuruksetra region¹. The Junagadh Rock Inscription of Skandagupta, referring to the temple of Viṣṇu erected in the year 456 A.D. by Cakrapālita, the son of Prānadatta who was appointed the Viceroy of Saurashtra by Skandagupta, opens with the invocation of Viṣṇu in his Vāmana incarnation². Kālidāsa in the Raghuvamśa alludes to the difficult task of Vāmana, comparing it with his own³, in the opening of the first canto.

The survey in the foregoing pages makes it amply clear that Vāmana like the Varāha and Nṛsimha incarnations, must have been much worshipped by the people right from the Gupta period. Though no shrine dedicated to Vāmana has come to light so far, its possibility cannot be ruled out. But inspite of its important position in the field of religion, Vāmana does not seem to have formed a cult which could have been reflected by the elaborate iconographical forms in the following periods.

1. Agrawal V.S., op. cit., p. 66.

2. Fleet J.F., Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. III.
p. 58-59.

3. Kālidāsa, Raghuvamśa, I, 3.

PARAŚURĀMA

All the five avatāras discussed above obtained importance largely owing to their symbolic significance rooted in the ancient past. But Paraśurāma is a real historical figure, probably a great warrior of a particular tribe, later on deified and exalted to the position of an incarnation of a very prominent and popular god. Hence, with the advent of Paraśurāma some historicity is introduced into the avatāra concept of Viṣṇu.

Pāṇinī¹ mentions a tribe or people known as Paraśus, but whether there is any relation between Paraśurāma and that tribe is difficult to say, because Paraśurāma is used merely as a proper noun and besides in earlier references we find him designated only as Rāma, Bhārgava or Jāmada-gneya. He is called Paraśurāma probably because of his association with the Paraśu or axe - his weapon - with which he killed his mother at the commandment of his father².

Unfortunately, the initial stages of the development of the story of Paraśurāma are lost and what we find in the earliest known references is a full-fledged myth of

1. Pāṇinī, V, 3, 119.

2. तत आदाय परशुं रामो मातुः शिरःहरत् ॥
Mahābhārata, III, 116, 14.

the deified Paraśurāma.

The famous story of Paraśurāma is related in detail in the Mahābhārata, III, 116. The sage Jāmadagni had five sons by Renukā, the last of them being Rāma. Once, when Renukā had gone to the riverside to fetch fruit for the sacrifice, she saw king Citraratha sporting merrily in the river. Renukā waited for a while to witness the scene. When she returned to the hermitage excited with impure thoughts, the sage turned her out and ordered his sons one after another to kill her. Failing to carry out his orders, the first four sons were cursed to death. Rāma, the youngest of all, obeyed his father and proceeded to kill his mother. Pleased with this deed, Jāmadagni offered a boon to his son. Paraśurāma asked for the resurrection of his mother and brothers.

Once upon a time, king Kārtavīrya came to the hermitage of Jāmadagni and took away forcibly their cows. So Paraśurāma went and killed the king. To avenge their father's death, Kārtavīrya's sons murdered the sage in the absence of Paraśurāma, who later on took an oath to destroy the whole of the Kṣatriya race. He undertook his campaign of destruction twenty-one times.

It may be briefly noted that the character of Paraśurāma is represented unfavourably in the Rāmāyana. He is defeated by the Dāśarathī Rāma¹. This may be the result of an attempt

1. Rāmāyana, I, 71.

to establish the supremacy of the Kṣatriyas over the Brāhmaṇas.

This avatāra hardly attained any importance among the worshippers of Viṣṇu, but in the avatāra panels he gets his place.

The iconography of Parāśurāma is simple and unvaried. According to the Viṣṇudharmottaram he should have a jatā on his head and his only emblem is the axe¹. The Agni Purāṇa prescribes four hands to the image of Parāśurāma holding the bow, the arrow, the axe and the sword².

The Vaikhānasāgama describes two varieties of the image of this avatāra. One is two-handed and the other is four-handed³. The two-handed image should have the axe in the right hand and the left hand should be in the śuci-mudrā.

1.

कार्यस्तु मार्गवो रामो जटामण्डलदुर्दशः ॥
हस्तेऽस्य परशुः कार्यः कृष्णाजिनधरस्य तु ।

Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 85, 61-62.

2.

रामश्चापेषुहस्तः स्यात्सङ्गी परशुनान्वितः ॥

Agni Purāṇa, 49, 5.

3.

जामदग्निरामं ----- द्विभुजं रक्ताभं वेतवस्त्रधरं दक्षिणेन
हस्तेन परशुधरं वाममुद्देश्यकरं जटामुकुटं सौपवीतिनं सर्वाभरण
भूषितं स्थापयेत् । तद्वपुं विष्णुं चतुर्भुजं वा ।

Vaikhānasāgama, Paṭala 59, p. 200.

He should wear Jaṭāmukuta, Yajñopavīta and other ornaments. If the image is four-handed, it should hold the usual attributes of Viṣṇu.

An image has been discovered in Timba, a village near Amreli in Gujarat, belonging to the Gupta period. It is a mutilated piece and hence its exact identification is difficult but an axe in the right hand of the figure indicates that it may be the representation of Paraśurāma¹. If the identification is correct, the image is the earliest document to testify to the prevalence of Paraśurāma worship in Gujarat.

On the left outside wall of the Pārśvanātha temple at Khajuraho² are two images of Paraśurāma, both of them holding a fruit (citron?), the conch, the lotus and the battle-axe. The attributes of these images are quite different from the attributes suggested by the Sanskrit texts cited above.

A beautiful image of Paraśurāma has been reproduced by Bhattasali N.K.³ The god holds in his upper two hands

-
1. Dave K.B., Gujarātnu Mūrti Vidhān. p. 203.
 2. Agrawal Urmila, Khajuraho Sculptures and Their Significance. p. 29.
 3. Bhattasali N.K., Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum. Pl. XXXIX.

the battle-axe and the disc, the lower right hand is in varada-mudrā and the lower left hand holds the conch. Below on the pedestal is a small figure of Garuḍa with folded hands. This image, standing in the tribhaṅga pose is a fine specimen of the 11th century and of eastern India.

There is a very peculiar representation of Parāśurāma at Basohli, on the opposite wall of the Baoli of Dhan, three miles away from Thara-Kadwal on the way to Kuhn. The second panel on the wall beginning from the upper end depicts a fight between two persons, one of whom is multi-armed and the other carries a battle-axe in his right hand. With the left hand he has caught the hair of his opponent. Only five of the multiple hands of the other figure are visible carrying the mace, the sword, the kukri, the dagger, etc. This obviously depicts the fight between Parāśurāma and Kārtavīrya Arjuna¹. The image belongs to the late mediaeval period.

The images of Parāśurāma are very few in number. All those that have come to light are also datable to the mediaeval period. The utter absence of Parāśurāma images excepting these stray ones, makes it obvious that this avatāra exerted only a limited influence on the Vaiṣṇava devotees. It being a minor avatāra, temples were not usually

1. Kak R.C., Antiquities of Basohli and Ramnagar. Indian Arts and Letters. Vol. VII. No. 2, 1933. p. 83.

dedicated to him. There are a couple of temples of Parāśurāma in Gujarat¹ probably owing to his traditional association with the river Narmada where Jāmadagni's hermitage was supposed to have been situated.

1. Dave K.B., op. cit. p. 203-209.

RĀMA-DĀŚARATHI

The legend of Rāma which has greatly influenced Indian culture and religion, must have had a long history before it was incorporated in the Rāmāyana, but its threads are loose and do not allow us to trace its origin and evolution. Rāma himself never figures in the pre-Rāmāyana literature. Janaka is often mentioned in the Brāhmanas and the Upaniṣads¹ but there is hardly any justification for the supposition that he is the same Janaka who is the father-in-law of Rāma.

The term Sītā occurs in the Rig-veda IV, 57, 6, where it signifies the "furrow". The character of Sītā reflected in the Rāmāyana, is not connected with a fertility cult, nor do we find her in any way associated with agriculture. Her only epithet "bhūmisutā" is not sufficient to prove her identity with "Sītā" of the Veda. In the opinion of the scholars like Weber and Winternitz, Sītā of the Rig-veda is "separated by a wide gulf from the Sītā of the Rāmāyana."²

It seems quite probable that Rāma must have been a Ksatriya hero, eulogized by the court bards of ancient times.

1. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, XI, 3, 1, 12, 6.

Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, III, 8, 2.

2. Winternitz M., History of Indian Literature, Vol. III, Delhi, 1963. p. 515.

As Macdonell has surmised, "in Ayodhya, then, there must have been current among the court bards (suta) a number of epic tales narrating the fortunes of the Ikṣvāku hero Rāma. Such legends, we may assume, Valmiki worked up in a single homogeneous production - Rāmāyana."¹

In the Rāmāyana itself, excepting the later interpolations,² Rāma is merely a great hero portrayed as an ideal son, husband and king. Later on he was deified and accepted as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. In the genuine portion of the Rāmāyana, he is at the most likened to Viṣṇu but never represented as an incarnation. Winternitz has propounded the theory that in Book II and VI, apart from a few passages which are doubtless interpolated, Rāma is always treated as a mortal, and in the indisputably genuine parts of the epic there is no indication whatsoever of his being conceived as an incarnation.³ Fr. Bulcke has thoroughly studied the evolution of the Rāma legend and has come to the conclusion that Rāma was originally a hero later on deified and identified with Viṣṇu.⁴

The legend of Rāma is too well-known to receive detailed attention here. The Mahābhārata version is similar to the

-
1. Macdonell A.A., History of Sanskrit Literature, London, 1928. p. 306.
 2. Winternitz has proved, following Jacobi, that Books I and VII of the Rāmāyana are interpolated. See, op.cit. p. 495.
 3. Winternitz M., op.cit., P. 497.
 4. Bulcke C., Rāma-kathā (in Hindi). Prayag, 1962. p. 129-37.

Rāmāyana and the Purāṇas also follow the Rāmāyana of Vālmiki in treating Rāma's life.

The image of Rāma, according to the Viṣṇudharmottaram, should be adorned with all the royal marks of a king. His brothers Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and Śatrughna are also to be carved in the same manner but without the tiara.¹

In the Agni Purāṇa Rāma is described as holding the bow, the arrow, the sword and the conch.²

It is rather surprising that we do not meet with such cult images of Rāma, described above, in the early centuries of the Christian era, but Rāmāyana had such a great impact on the people that various episodes from the life of Rāma are profusely carved on the walls of the early temples. So far, no shrine dedicated to Rāma has come to light before the mediaeval period. Though no cult image of Rāma has come to light before that period, it will be interesting to describe here some of the panels on the outer walls of temples, depicting the Rāmāyana scenes.

-
1. रामो दाशरथिः कार्यो राजलक्षणलङ्घितः ॥
मरुतो लक्ष्मणश्चैव शत्रुघ्नश्च महायशः ।
तथैव सर्वे कर्तव्याः किन्तु मोलिविवर्जिताः ॥

Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 85, 62-63.

2.

रामश्चापी शरी सङ्गी संखी वा द्विभुजः स्मृतः ।
Agni Purāṇa, 49, 6.

The Transformation of Ahalyā: Rāma transformed Ahalyā into a woman, who was cursed by her husband to turn into a stone in the forest till Rāma would come and redeem her.¹

A panel on the plinth of the Daśavatāra temple at Deogarh represents this episode.² The background of the panel is covered with trees and leaves indicating a forest scene. On the left of the panel is a figure with matted hair having a quiver behind his shoulders and a bow in his left hand. He is shown to be seated on a stone slab by the side of which appears a female figure worshipping him. She must be Ahalyā who was transformed to stone by her husband. Lakṣmaṇa with a bow in his hand is standing behind Rāma. The bearded figure to the right is the sage Viśvāmitra.

The same scene is also carved on the wall of the Patthara Ghati temple at Nalanda. On the fourth panel of the east face is a two-armed standing male figure, apparently Rāma, holding an arrow in the right hand and a bow in the left hand. A kneeling female figure with folded hands is seated to the right of Rāma. Trees and foliage in the background indicate it to be a forest scene.³

1. Rāmāyana, I, 49.

2. Vats M.S., The Gupta Temple at Deogarh, MAI, No. 70.
p. 16. Pl. XV a.

3. Krishna Deva and Agrawal V.S., The Stone Temple at Nalanda, JUPHS, Vol. XXIII, 1950. p. 202.

Lakṣmaṇa Mutilating Śūrpaṇakhā: Śūrpaṇakhā, the sister of Rāvaṇa was enamoured by Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa when she saw them in the forest. Hence she went there and tried to entrap them but could not succeed. Thinking that Sītā is the cause of her failure, she tried to harass her and consequently Lakṣmaṇa got so angry that he cut her nose.¹

This popular incident is also depicted on the wall of the Daśavatāra temple. The panel shows on its right side Rāma with one of his hands raised up and the other holding a bow. Lakṣmaṇa has seized Śūrpaṇakhā by her hair and one of his hands armed with a sword is raised up so as to hit her. Sītā, terrified at the sight, has placed one of her hands on her breast.²

The same episode is also represented on the Paharpur temple³ as well as a temple at Sahet Mahet.⁴

Rāma Killing Demons: During his stay in the forest Rāma had to kill many demons. A panel on the Daśavatāra temple illustrates Rāma shooting at the demons with a bow and an arrow and Lakṣmaṇa is standing near him as his guard.⁵

1. Rāmāyaṇa, III, 16-17.

2. Vats M.S., op.cit. Pl. XVII a.

3. Dixit K.N., Exploration in Bengal, ASIAR, 1926-27.
Pl. XXXIV a.

4. Vogel J. Ph., Excavations at Sahet Mahet, ASIAR, 1907-08.
p. 96.

5. Vats M.S., op.cit. Pl. XVI b.

Abduction of Sītā: The famous episode of the Rāmāyana - the abduction of Sītā¹ - also finds its place in this series. The panel is however, fragmentary. There is a female bust and round its right shoulder is seen a gigantic male hand. The female figure has a very terrified expression and hence in all probability, it represents Rāvana abducting Sītā.²

Lakṣmaṇa Garlanding Sugrīva: Rāma helped Sugrīva, the ape-king to regain his power which was forcibly taken away by his own brother Vāli. Lakṣmaṇa garlanded him for his victory.³

A panel on the Daśavatāra temple illustrates this. Lakṣmaṇa holds a garland in his hand intended for the monkey-chief Sugrīva who is represented by his side, with the face of an ape on a human body.⁴

A relief at Sahet-Mahet also represents the fighting apes in all probability.⁵

A mutilated panel in the Allahabad Museum depicts Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with monkeys, in search of Sītā (fig. 42).

There are a few other fragmentary reliefs illustrating

-
1. Rāmāyana, III, 47.
 2. Vats M.S., op.cit. p. 17.
 3. Rāmāyana, IV, 12.
 4. Vats M.S., op.cit. Pl. XVII b.
 5. Vogel J. Ph., op.cit. p. 96.

the Rāmāyana scenes. A scene depicting Rāvana threatening Sītā shows a huge male figure aggressively threatening a small female figure by his side. She seems to be turning away from the giant. The episode took place in the Aśoka grove of Rāvana's palace.¹ The same theme is depicted on the panel No. 102 on the north wall of the stone temple at Nalanda. There are only a male and a female figure on the scene. The male figure has three heads, each head having its hair tied up in a knot. The six-handed giant holds in his right hands the bow, the sword and some indistinct object, and in his left hands the pestle, the arrow, while the third one is placed in front of his chest. He is shown to be advancing towards a female figure seated on the left corner turning her face away from him. Frightened by the advancing demon, she has placed one of her hands in front of her breast and the other is placed on the ground supporting the weight of her whole body.²

The last relief represents Hanumān bringing the mountain on which grows the life-giving drug for Lakṣmaṇa who had fainted due to many injuries on his body.³

There is an interesting representation of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā in the collection of the Provincial Museum, Lucknow.⁴

1. Vats M.S., op.cit. Pl. XVII d.

2. Agrawal V.S. and Krishna Deva, op.cit. p. 202.

3. Vats M.S., op.cit. Pl. XVII e.

4. Dayal Prayag, Important Sculptures Added to the Provincial Museum, Lucknow, JUPHS, Vol. VII, Part I, 1934. p. 73. Pl. V.

There are three main figures on the slab: Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are four-handed holding the usual attributes of Viṣṇu. There is a serpent hood around the face of Lakṣmaṇa who is considered to be an incarnation of Śeṣa. The female figure in the middle is halved and bears a lotus mark on the open palm of her right hand.

There is a beautiful representation of the Crossing of the River scene in the collection of the Indian Museum, datable to the 10th century. A royal figure is seated in the middle of a boat under an umbrella, flanked by an elephant on the right side and a horseman holding a cāmara on the left. He must be Bharata crossing the river with Guha following the path of Rāma. Near the rudder appear the boatmen. Apart from being the representation of a rare Rāmāyana scene the artistically-treated boat is important (fig. 43).

Two images of Rāma are also to be found in the Khajuraho group of temples.¹ On the left, outside the Pārśvanātha temple is an image of Rāma holding the bow and the arrow. Another image at the same place shows Rāma and Sītā in the ālingana-mudrā. The four-handed Rāma holds in his upper two hands the bow and the arrow, with his lower hand he

1. Agrawal Urmila, Khajuraho Sculptures and their Significance, p. 39.

blesses Hanumān seated at his right foot and with the upper left hand he embraces his consort. Sītā embraces Rāma with her right hand and holds a lotus in her left.¹

It will be interesting here to refer to some of the dhyānas of Rāma in brief. Rāma is sometimes described as being honoured by several sages. In the Rāmārcana Candrikā, Rāma is described in the palace at Ayodhya. He is seated on the Puṣpaka throne, with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa to his left. He is adored by sages and the Grahas.²

The same manuscript prescribes a form of Rāma to be meditated upon by those desirous of mokṣha. He is to be invoked as in Virāsana near the river Sarayu. One of his hands should be in the jñāna-mudrā and the other should be placed on his thigh. He is to be accompanied by Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa.³

According to the Silparatna Rāma is to be accompanied by Sītā only. Rāma seated in the virāsana shows the jñānamudrā with one of his hands and the other rests on

1. Agrawal Urmila, op.cit. Pl. XV.

2. Rāmārcana Candrikā, Manuscript. Oriental Institute, Baroda. No. 85. 10a.

3. Ibid., folio 7.



his lap. By his side is Sītā with a lotus in her hand.¹

One other variety of seated Rāma with Sītā is described in the Brhad Stotra. "I meditate upon Rāma, adorned with the jatamukuta, with long hands reaching upto the knees, wearing the yellow garment, his eyes look like a newly blossomed lotus and he is seated with his consort Sītā on his left thigh."²

Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in the forest are described in the Padma Purāṇa. It says:

"Rāma proceeded to the other forest after tying his hair in a jaṭā with a thread of his yajñopavīta, wearing valkala garments besmearing his body with ashes, wearing a rudrākṣa-mālā and is followed by Lakṣmaṇa."³

1. कालाम्बोधरकान्तिकान्तमनिशं वीरासनाध्यासितम्
मुद्रां ज्ञानमयीं दधानमपरं हस्ताम्बुजं जानुनि ।
सीतां पार्श्वगतां सरोल्हकरां विधुन्निमां राघवम्
पश्यन्तं मुकुटांगदादिविविधाकल्पोज्ज्वलांगं भजे ॥

Silparatna, Uttarabhāga, adh. 23, 29.

2. Brhad Stotra, Rāma Rakṣa Stotra, 89-90. p. 394.

3. अथोपवने दिनमेकं स्थित्वा जटाः कारयित्वा बल्कलं वाससं
धृत्वेकोपवीती कृतदन्तशुद्धिरेकेनोपवीतेन जटाबद्ध्वा भस्मोद्धृत
सर्वांगोभासित निष्ठुर कायो मुक्ताफलदामा मणिव्यन्यस्त
रुद्राक्षमालामुरसि दधतीऽल्पमूषणादिभूषित सीतासहायो
लक्ष्मणानुचरो विवेश वनान्तरम् ॥

Padma Purāṇa, Pātāla khanda, 4, 112, 13

Generally Rāma is accompanied by Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā but the Paurāṇa Karma describes him accompanied by his father:

"Rāma having broad and tender eyes like lotus is accompanied on the right side by Daśaratha anxiously looking at his son, a little behind him stands Lakṣmaṇa holding an umbrella. In the rear appear Bharata and Śatrughna and in front stands Hanumān soliciting the grace of Rāma."¹

Rāma in the reclining position is also sometimes worshipped. According to the Atri Samhitā "Rāma is reclining his head in the lap of Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa should be shown to be shampooing his feet."²

Like Bāla-Kṛṣṇa, Bāla-Rāma is also described by the Brhad Stotra. The child is seated on his father's lap,

1. Paurāṇa Karma, III, p. 71.

2.

विशेषमत्र वक्ष्यामि शयने राघवस्य तु ।
प्राङ्मुख्यं चैव सीताया उरौ विन्यस्य मस्तकम् ॥
तत्काले तत्पुत्रं देवं पाद (संवाहने रतम्) ।
हस्तमुखं राघवस्य पीडयन्तं पदाम्बुजौ ॥

Atri Samhitā, (ed. Raghunath and Kavé, Tirupati, 1943).
60, 44-45.

adorned with ornaments. He holds in his tiny hands the bow and the arrow.

An attempt has also been made to synthesize the form of Rāma with that of Siva when the Rāma cult had gained in importance. Nāradiya Mahāpurāṇa refers to Rāma identified with Siva and there is Umā also with him. He holds all the 'Saivite āyudhas.¹

Most of the dhyānas referred to above are much later in date but they are cited just to bring to the fore the number of varieties of Rāma images that evolved in that period. The Rāmāyana seems to have become popular in the Gupta period as we find it sometimes illustrated in stone on the walls of the early temples. It is surprising that very few Rāmāyana scenes have come to light from the Western India till the mediaeval period, and even those that are found are negligible.² The Rāmāyana had a deep impact on the culture of the people

1.

रामं त्रिनेत्रं सोमार्धधारिणं शूलिनं वरम् ।
मस्मोद्धूतित सवर्गं कपदिनमुपास्महे ॥
रामाभिरामां सौन्दर्यसीमां सोमावतंसिनीम् ।
पाशांकुशधनुर्बाणधरां ध्यायेन्निलोचनाम् ॥

Nāradiya Mahāpurāṇa, Venkatesvara Press, Bombay, 1905, Pūrva khanda, 73, 116-117.

2. Agrawal R.C., Rāmāyana Scenes in Rajasthan Sculptures, IHQ, Vol. XXX, March 1954. p. 154-160.

and it spread even outside India, in Thailand and Cambodia. But still the Rāma worship, forming its own separate and distinctive cult does not seem to have existed before the mediaeval period, because as far as is known to us, the sculptural evidence to prove its existence is not abundant. The incarnation of Rāma definitely remains a minor one till the late mediaeval period, and a very strong prevalence of the Rāma cult is only a relatively later growth.

KṚṢṆA-BALARĀMA

It is difficult to ascertain the exact date of the beginning of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma worship due to lack of proper historical evidences. The available material also does not lead us beyond a mere conjecture that Kṛṣṇa worship must have been prevalent a couple of centuries before the beginning of the Christian Era. It is, however, certain that Kṛṣṇa is a deified hero, like Rāma, round whom several legendary tales were woven.

In the R̥g-Veda, Kṛṣṇa Angirasa is mentioned as a renowned seer.¹ The Kausitakī Brāhmaṇa also alludes to one Kṛṣṇa Angirasa.² Kṛṣṇa as Devaki-putra appears in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad³ where he is identified as a pupil of Ghora Angirasa. From these meagre references, it seems that there was a renowned sage Kṛṣṇa, known in the Vedic period, who was later on deified and identified with Vāsudeva. Another possibility is that Vāsudeva belonged to the Kṛṣṇāyana gotra mentioned by Pāṇini and was consequently known by the name Kṛṣṇa and later on the legends of cowherd Kṛṣṇa were associated with Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa. That Vāsudeva and Kṛṣṇa are synonyms is also corroborated by Patañjali. While

-
1. R̥g-Veda, VIII, 84, 3-4.
 2. Kausitakī Brāhmaṇa, XXX, 9.
 3. Chāndogya Upaniṣad, III, 17, 6.

commenting on Pāṇini Sūtra III, 1, 26, he refers to Kamsa-bhakta and Vāsudeva-bhakta. The terms indicate the servants of Vāsudeva and Kamsa in the performance of a sort of drama. At the same time he also mentions the defeated party of Kamsa and the victorious party of Vāsudeva. It should be noted that the worship of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa explained in the earlier chapter does not involve the Kṛṣṇa līlā episodes in its initial stages. The feats of cowherd Kṛṣṇa are purely a later interpolation¹ and those legends appear only when Kṛṣṇa is turned into an incarnation of Viṣṇu. The religion that developed round the figure of Kṛṣṇa in the later period, necessarily harped upon these feats of the child Kṛṣṇa assigning to them a prime importance.

Though the cult images of Kṛṣṇa make their appearance very late, Kṛṣṇāvatāra itself seems to have been very popular right from the Gupta period, just as it happened in the case of Rāma, but in the case of Kṛṣṇa, only his childhood feats are very popular.

The Harivamśa gives a detailed account of Kṛṣṇalīlā which is not to be found anywhere in the Mahābhārata itself. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the sacred book of the Bhāgavatas or Vaiṣṇavas till the present day, follows to a great extent

1. Bhandarkar R.G., Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems. p. 49-54.

the Hārivaṃśa. All the childhood stories of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are not chiselled in stone but the sculptors made use of some of the important episodes favoured commonly by the people.

The main story begins with the birth of Kṛṣṇa in the jail. The Nativity of Kṛṣṇa is open to doubts because this feature is common to all the pantheons - in Buddhism and in Jainism. Immediately after his birth Devaki handed over the child to Vāsudeva in order to exchange him with the child of Nanda as already enjoined by Viṣṇu himself. A panel at the famous Daśavatāra temple at Deogarh depicts a woman handing over a child to a male figure, evidently to Vāsudeva.¹ He is standing to the left of the female figure, Devaki, and taking away from her the new-born babe with curly hair. A couple of panels on the same temple also represent Vāsudeva fondling the child with whom he has soon to depart. These panels are mutilated and have retained only a child being swung in the hands of a male figure.² An 8th century panel at Pahrpur in Bengal also shows Vāsudeva with Kṛṣṇa in his hand before exchanging him with a child of Nanda.³

Crossing the river: A panel datable to the Kushana period, preserved in the Mathura Museum, depicts the epi-

-
1. Vats M.S., Gupta Temple at Deogarh, MASI. 70. Pl. XVIIIa.
 2. Ibid., Pl. XXI d & f.
 3. Saraswati S.K., Early Sculpture of Bengal, Calcutta, 1962. Pl. XII, fig. 29.

sode just after the birth of Kṛṣṇa. The child Kṛṣṇa was carried in a basket to Gokul, crossing the river Jumna. He was protected by a serpent with his hood from the torrential rains. There at Gokul, Vāsudeva exchanged his baby boy with the daughter of Yaśodā and quietly returned to Mathura. The river in this panel is indicated by the ripples carved on the surface and also by a number of aquatic animals like crocodile, tortoise, etc. Near the bank of the river is seen a stout person with a basket on his head, supported by his hands. In front of them is a seven-hooded serpent advancing towards the opposite bank.¹

Several exploits are attributed to Kṛṣṇa in his childhood but all of them are not depicted in stone, and hence we come across only the principal and popular events of his life, which are dealt with in order of sequence.

Sakatabhaṅga: Once Yaśodā had gone to the river Jumna leaving the child Kṛṣṇa alone playing under a cart in front of their house. When Kṛṣṇa felt hungry he started crying and throwing his arms up and down, and with one of his legs he hurled down the whole cart.²

The lower panel of the gateway discovered at Mandor also illustrated the scene in a very vivid way. A child is

-
1. Sahani Daya Ram, "A Stone Sculpture Representing an Incident From the Life of Kṛṣṇa", ASIAR, 1925-26. p. 184. Pl. IXLVII.
 2. Harivamsa, II, 6, 4-5.

sleeping under a big cart with a toy-bird in his hand, kicking the cart with his left leg. The female figure standing near the child is Yaśodā who has returned after her bath, and sees the cart destroyed by the hungry child who is holding her breast.¹ These are two similar early representations of the episode, datable to the 4th century A.D.

The depiction of this event has survived on some of the early panels on temple walls. The famous Daśavatāra temple at Deogarh has a panel on its plinth showing a child reclining on a bed under the cart which is being hurled down with his left foot. The cart has a small floral decorative pattern on its sides and contains a number of pots in it. The female figure, standing in front, is amazed to see the strength of the child.²

The depiction of the Śakātabhaṅga is also noted from Osian and Kiradu.³ An illustration of the same episode also exists on the outer wall of the Lakṣmana temple at Khajuraho. Kṛṣṇa holds the two front supporting bamboos of the cart, and is standing with one leg placed on its wheel so as to break it. The only noticeable feature is the representation

-
1. Bhandarkar D.R., "Excavations at Mandor", ASIAR, 1905-06. p. 137, and ASIAR 1909-10. Pl. XLIV b.
 2. Vats M.S., Gupta Temple at Deogarh, MASI, No. 70. Pl. XVIII b.
 3. Agrawal R.C., "Kṛṣṇa and Balaram in Rajasthan Sculptures and Epigraphs", IHQ, Vol. XXX, p. 350-52.

of the incident.¹

The episode seems to have been quite popular especially in the early period.

Pūtana-vadha: Kamsa had employed a demoness of his court named Pūtana for the destruction of the child Kṛṣṇa. She took the form of a damsel and came to Nanda's house at midnight. She had gone there to suckle the child with venomous paste applied to her breasts. But instead of being poisoned by her, Kṛṣṇa sucked out her soul through her breasts.²

The incident is not found on the early panels showing the Kṛṣṇa-līlā scenes. The only representation known to us is on the outer wall of the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho. Kṛṣṇa lying on the lap of Pūtana has sucked out her life and consequently she is turned into a skeleton, with her eyes bulging out, her mouth widely open, and her bones and veins exposed. The upraised hands of Pūtana show her in a state of utter distress while meeting her death.³

Stealing of Butter: Kṛṣṇa was very much loved by the people, especially the women folk who rejoiced at his naughty habits of stealing butter. A mutilated panel representing

-
1. Krishna Deva, "Kṛṣṇalīlā Scenes in the Lakṣmaṇa Temple at Khajuraho". Lalit Kalā, No. 7, Pl. XXXII, fig. 6.
 2. Harivamśa, II, 6, 24-26.
 3. Krishna Deva, op. cit., Pl. XXXIV, fig. 11.

the child Kṛṣṇa, stealing butter from a milk-pot, is preserved in the collection of the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Benaras (No. 180). This panel, belonging to the early Gupta period, shows a small child with curly hair bending over a pot, trying to hold butter in his hand. Behind in the back ground can be seen a woman who may be identified as Yaśodā or a gopī.

Kṛṣṇa stealing butter is also carved on the panel on the gateway of Mandor. It is much weather-worn, but leaves enough indication to identify the scene. The panel is divided into two parts, on the right side are some cows and on the left can be seen a woman churning the butter milk and a child trying to get some butter from the pot.¹

An eighth century panel at Paharpur has a child eating a butter-ball held in his hand, which in all probability represents the same scene.²

Yamalārjuna-bhaṅga: Once when Yaśodā was tired of this naughty habit of Kṛṣṇa, she tied him to a grinding stone with a rope. Kṛṣṇa dragged himself to the river bank where stood the trees of Yamala and Arjuna. He tried to pass through them and while doing so the trees were hurled down and uprooted by the force of the big stone tied to Kṛṣṇa.³ The Bhāgavata version mentions that these trees

-
1. Bhandarkar, op. cit., p. 137, fig. 1.
 2. Saraswati S.K., op. cit., Pl. XI, fig. 28.
 3. Harivamśa, II, 7, 17-19.

were two yaksas, who had been cursed to go to the earth in the form of trees till Kṛṣṇa would deliver them.¹

The Buddhist temple at Paharpur contains a panel on the basement wall representing this episode. A small figure, with his hair arranged in a tuft and with vyāghra-nakha around his neck is flanked by trees which are shown to be uprooted by him. Under the roots of the trees are carved the miniature yaksas suggesting their deliverance by Kṛṣṇa as related in the Bhāgavata. It is a crude execution of the Yamālārjuna-bhaṅga episode.

The same incident is also illustrated on a panel on the south face of the Lakṣmana temple at Khajuraho. Kṛṣṇa is holding the trunks of two trees and uprooting them. On the top of the trees are seen small heads representing the yaksas.²

After this incident the family of Nanda shifted to Vṛndāvana, where Kṛṣṇa defeated and killed two demons named Bakāsura, the swan, and Vatsāsura, the calf. These incidents are not related in the Harivamśa, but the Bhāgavata Purāṇa does refer to them.³ The Vatsāsura-vadha is depicted on a mutilated panel of the Mandor Pillar.⁴

-
1. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, X, 10.
 2. Krishna Deva, op. cit., Pl. XXXIV, fig. 11.
 3. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, X, 11.
 4. Marshall and Sahani, "Excavations at Mandor", ASIAR, 1909-10. Pl. XLIV b.

A panel on the north wall of the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho illustrates the same episode. Kṛṣṇa is twisting the muzzle and the tail of the calf with his two hands. The upper two hands are simply raised up. Just to show the ease with which he overpowered the demon, Kṛṣṇa is shown to be standing in the dancing position.¹

Kāliya Mardana: One of the most favourite exploits of Kṛṣṇa is his subjugation of the serpent Kāliya. There stayed in the waters of Jumna a serpent named Kāliya who had poisoned the waters of the Jumna. Once Kṛṣṇa thought of destroying it for the sake of the people. So he jumped from a Kadamba tree into the river and subjugated him.²

The earliest representation of the scene is on the Mandor pillar. Kṛṣṇa is trampling upon the tail of the serpent with his right foot and his head with the left foot. In his up-lifted right hand he holds the flower and in his left hand he holds the rein with which he had threaded the serpent.³

Krishna Deva refers to a fragmentary Gupta relief from Mathura representing Kṛṣṇa riding on the serpent holding the reins in his hand.⁴ A terracotta plaque from Mathura, representing the same scene is preserved in the collection of the Baroda Museum.⁵

1. Krishna Deva, op.cit., Pl. XXXII, fig. 5.

2. Harivamśa, II, 11-12.

3. ASIAR, 1909-10, Pl. XLIV.

4. Krishna Deva, op.cit., p. 86.

5. Goetz Hermann, Earliest Representation of the Myth Cycle of Kṛṣṇa Govinda, JOI, Vol. I, No. I. Pl. i, fig. 1.

a six-century relief from Bhuvanesvara, showing river, the Kadamba tree and Kṛṣṇa trampling upon Kālīya is also published by Goetz.¹

A stylized representation of the episode is executed on niche of a temple at Asodar in Gujarat. On the left side are depicted a tree, evidently the Kadamba, and a child trying to climb it. It represents the earlier part of the story when Kṛṣṇa climbed the Kadamba tree and jumped into the river. To its right is seen Kṛṣṇa attacking the serpent Kālīya who is in half human and half serpent form. His head is surmounted by serpent hood. His tail is wound round Kṛṣṇa's waist. Kṛṣṇa seizes his hand with one hand and the other is raised up to attack him. His left leg is folded as if to trample the serpent. Kṛṣṇa is shown as a child with curly hair and he is wearing short tunic. (fig. 44).

A panel on the west face of the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho represents a four-armed Kṛṣṇa trampling upon the

1. Goetz Hermann, op. cit., Pl. 1, fig. 2.

tail of the serpent with his right foot. He carries a lotus stalk in his two lower hands. The end of the lotus stalk held in his left hand is inserted into the mouth of Kāliya to indicate the threading of his mouth. The upper right hand of Kṛṣṇa is held over his head in a dancing position and the lower one holds the disc. Kāliya is represented in human form with a beard and a canopy of serpent hood. His hands are folded in the añjali-mudrā.¹

Kṛṣṇa Kāliyamardana becomes more popular in the mediaeval period. The motif is adopted for ceiling decoration in the mediaeval temples especially in western India. It could very well be substituted for the earlier lotus motifs because its execution provides a nice circular pattern, with the intertwined tails of the nāgas and nāgīs and the principal two figures in the centre.

A beautiful illustration of the Kāliyamardana scene is found on the ceiling of the shrine of a 10th century temple at Asodar in Gujarat. Kṛṣṇa is seen dancing on the hood of a serpent who is represented in human form with folded hands. In the uplifted right hand Kṛṣṇa holds a flute and the left one is placed on his chest. On the either side of them are three nāgīs, carved in a half-human form, in the añjali-mudrā. Their tails are entwined with the coils of Kāliya forming a big circle around them. (fig.45).

1. Krishna Deva, op. cit. Pl. XXXII, 4.

An 11th century panel of the Kāliyamardana executed in similar way is on the ceiling of the Vimala Vasāhi temple at Abu. Kṛṣṇa and Kāliya in the centre are flanked by seven nāga queens.¹ This scene on the Jaina temple is noteworthy as it indicated the adoption of Hindu mythology, though the Jaina version of the legend differs slightly from that of the Bhāgavata.²

Similar images have also come to light from different parts of Gujarat. One from the Jami Masjid at Mangrol is published by Cousens.³ It is very stylistically represented in a temple at Manod, a village near Sunak. A four-handed Kṛṣṇa holds the usual emblems of Viṣṇu and he has placed his right leg on the shoulder of the serpent, depicted as usual in human form with the añjali-mudrā. The entwined tails of the serpent and his two queens form an intricately carved circular pattern. Cousens has wrongly identified the panel as Viṣṇu seated on Śeṣa.⁴ A couple of other such images are also noted from the temple at Manhud and a Kṛṣṇa temple at Madhavpur.⁵

-
1. Muni Jayantavijayaji, (Tr. Shah U;P.) Holy Abu.
Bhavnagar, 1954. Pl. 16.
 2. Ibid., p. 74.
 3. Cousens, Somnath and Other Mediaeval Temples at Kathiawad.
Pl. LXXXVIII.
 4. Burgess and Cousens, Architectural Antiquities of North Gujarat. p. 109, fig. 10.
 5. Dave K.B., Gujarātnu Mūrtividhān. p. 211.

GOVARDHANA-DHARANA

The next important episode that has acquired the utmost popularity is the Govardhana-dharana. The story of Govardhana-līlā, when Kṛṣṇa rescued the people from the heavy rains by lifting up the mountain to shelter them, is too wellknown to be related.¹

A much mutilated panel of the Kushana period in the collection of Bharat Kala Bhavan (No. 22092), in all probability, illustrates this episode. Only the head of the main figure has survived and above the head is what looks like a clear representation of a mountain. If the identification is correct, it is one of the earliest representation of Kṛṣṇa-līlā scenes, so far known to us.

A complete and detailed execution of the scene is found on the panel of a door-jamb from Mandor - datable to the 4th century A.D. The sculptor has followed in many details the description given in the Harivamśa. The panel itself is divided into three parts, the uppermost representing the seven-peaked mountain. On the right side of a mountain peak is seen a lion and on its left a lioness, and below them are two serpents - all upset because of the uprooting of the mountain. The major portion of the middle part of the panel is covered by a big figure evidently Kṛṣṇa supporting the mountain by his upraised left hand. To his left are seen

1. Harivamśa, II, 17, 18.

the small figures of cowherds and cowherdesses. The one uppermost, trying to support the mountain may be Balarāma. The lower part of the panel shows cows and other animals whom Kṛṣṇa sheltered under his protection.¹ Apart from being an early piece, the panel is interesting as it depicts the incident in its minutest details, quite unlike many other such representations.

An image of Kṛṣṇa supporting the mountain, datable to the 4th century A.D., is preserved in the collection of the Bharat Kala Bhavan. The Vyāgharanakha adorning his neck and the Kākapakṣa style of hair clearly identify the figure as Bāla-Kṛṣṇa. On his left hand is supported a mountain, and the other arm is akimbo. The existence of such a huge figure marks the possibility of a big temple whose niche or panel this image must have occupied. (fig. 46).

Another such image belonging to the same period, from Mathura has been published by Coomaraswamy.² The right arm of the figure is akimbo and the upraised left one supports the mountain. The Kākapakṣa style of hair and the vanamālā adorn the figure. Flanking him in small panels can be seen at the bottom two cowherds and above them some animals.

-
1. Bhandarkar D.R., Two Sculptures at Mandor, ASIAR, 1905-06. Fig. 1 on p. 136.
 2. Coomaraswamy A.K., History of Indian and Indonesian Art. Pl. XXIX, fig. 102.



A similar figure from Kara, belonging to the 5th century A.D., is preserved in the collection of the Allahabad Museum (No. 259).

A Gupta terracotta of Kṛṣṇa Govardhanadhārī, found at Rangmahal, now in the Bikaner Museum, is published by Goetz. The image is of crude workmanship. Its only importance lies in its indication that this theme had penetrated deeply into the life of the masses, whose art it represents.¹ In the mediaeval period also this theme continued to attract the attention of the artists. A panel on the South-eastern wall of the Paharpur temple bears the illustration of this scene. Peculiarly enough, the figure of Kṛṣṇa is four-handed, with two hands supporting the mountain and the other two placed on two small figures. Kṛṣṇa Govardhanadhārī, for the first time, is depicted with four hands, in this 8th century panel.²

A panel belonging to the 10th century, showing a big cow suckling a calf, is preserved in the Patna Museum (No. 5842). To the left of the cow is a disproportionately small figure of Kṛṣṇa lifting up the mountain. A similar image is also preserved in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (No. 33.65.5). A similar image found at Jatipara is also exhibited in the Indian Museum. The child Kṛṣṇa is lifting up the mountain with his left arm and under the mountain is a cow suckling

-
1. Goetz Hermann, The Art & Architecture of Bikaner State, Pl. 5.
 2. ASIAR, 1926-27. p. 143.

the calf.¹

A fairly good number of Kṛṣṇa Govardhanadhārī images bear testimony to the popularity of the theme as early as the Gupta period, especially in the adjoining regions of Mathura where he enacted these exploits. The role of Kṛṣṇa as a protector, very befitting the concept of a beneficent god, must have led to its wide and lasting popularity. It may be noted here, that the image of Śrīnāthaji, worshipped by the later Vaiṣṇavas till the present day, is a form of Kṛṣṇa Govardhanadhārī, as is clearly indicated by its upraised left hand.

The images of Kṛṣṇa himself in this form are simple in execution, with one of the hands, mostly the left one, lifting the mountain. There are always some indications to depict him as a child. The representation of the adjoining figures of cowherds and animals is not compulsory, its composition is left to the imagination of individual sculptors.

The great popularity of the Kṛṣṇa Govardhana-līlā, in Rajasthan is amply evidenced by a number of panels illustrating this episode on the walls of mediaeval temples. R.C. Agrawal refers to those from the Osian and Someśvara temples at Kiradu.² A beautiful description of this incident is given in the inscription of Rupaden at Jodhpur dated

1. ASIAR, 1921-22. Pl. XXXVI e.

2. Agrawal R.C., op. cit., p. 346, 350.

13th century A.D.¹ Its great impact on the religious life of the people is also obvious from a number of memorial pillars of the mediaeval period, bearing the illustration of this scene, still existent in Rajasthan.

Thus, of all the episodes concerning the exploits of Kṛṣṇa, Govardhanadharana is especially favoured by the people throughout the centuries. In the earlier period it acquired great importance in Uttar Pradesh and in the later period in Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Keśīvadha: An important feat of Kṛṣṇa after this is the destruction of the demon Keśī who attempted to kill Kṛṣṇa in the form a horse. He stayed in the forest near Vṛndāvana and once when Kṛṣṇa went there with his friends Keśī rushed to attack him on his chest with his two front legs. But Kṛṣṇa inserted his hand into the horse's mouth and killed him.²

A panel on the gateway of Mandor, illustrates Kṛṣṇa as Keśīhantā. A small figure of Kṛṣṇa is hitting the mouth of the horse demon who is standing on his hind legs, with his left arm. The right hand is also raised up as if to hit him.³

A very mutilated piece, supposedly of Kṛṣṇa Keśīhantā, from Valabhi in Saurashtra has been published by Dr. U.P. Shah.

-
1. Ep. Ind., Vol. IV, p. 313.
 2. Hariṣaṃsa, II, 24, 32-37. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, X, 37.
 3. ASIAR, 1909-10. Pl. XLIV, 6.

A headless figurē is seen standing firmly with his mutilated right hand upraised, probably to hit the demon. To his left is an animal, evidently the horse, supporting himself on his hind legs, the front two being raised up to hit Kṛṣṇa. As the head of the animal is also missing, we cannot know whether the arm of Kṛṣṇa was inserted in his mouth. The sculpture belongs to the 6th century A.D.¹

A specimen of Kṛṣṇa killing Keśī has come to light from the Buddhist temple at Paharpur. The forest is indicated by a couple of trees in the background. The figure of the child Kṛṣṇa adorned with Vyāghranakha and Kākapakṣa style of hair, is seen with his right hand upraised to hit the demon who is standing on his hind legs to the left of Kṛṣṇa. The left elbow of Kṛṣṇa is inserted into the mouth of the horse. The figure below the feet of Kṛṣṇa shows the latter part of the story when the defeated demon was breathing his last and is being trampled upon by Kṛṣṇa. This 7th century panel is a vivid illustration of the episode.

A similar image datable to the same period is preserved in the collection of the Amber Museum (D.G.A. No. 71/54). This incident of Kṛṣṇa's life also seems to be fairly popular.

After this episode Kṛṣṇa proceeds to Mathura to kill

-
1. Shah U.P., Sculptures from Sāmlāji and Rodā. p.24-25, fig.12.
 2. Saraswati S.K., Early Sculpture of Bengal. Pl.VI, fig. 16, p. 65-67.

Kamsa and to fulfil one of his life's missions. On his way to Mathura also Kṛṣṇa is shown in action in a few noteworthy occasions.

Kubjoddharana: When Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were on their way to Kamsa an ugly woman very devotedly offered a fragrant paste to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa seeing her devotion took pity on her and turned her into a beautiful lady.¹

The incident is illustrated on a west face panel of the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho. It shows Kṛṣṇa accepting the present of the scented paste from an ugly looking woman standing to his left. Balarāma, standing to the right of Kṛṣṇa, is canopied by a serpent hood and has his right hand in the abhaya-mudrā and his left hand holds the plough.²

Destruction of Kuvalayāpīda: In front of the court of Kamsa, Kṛṣṇa destroyed the elephant who tried to attack him.³ The south face of the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho depicts Kṛṣṇa in the tribhaṅga posture, trampling with his left foot the elephant on his back and with his lower hand he is seizing his trunk. The upper right hand is raised with the gadā and the upper left is not clear. The elephant is seen in extreme agony.⁴

-
1. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, X, 42.
 2. Krishna Deva, op. cit., Pl. XXXIII, fig. 8.
 3. Harivamśa, II, 29, Bhāgavata Purāṇa, X, 43.
 4. Krishna Deva, op. cit., Pl. XXXI, fig. 3.

In the court of Kamsa, Kṛṣṇa killed three wrestlers, Śāla, Cāṇūra and Muṣṭika. Śāla-Vadha is represented in the west face of the same Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho. Kṛṣṇa has raised the gadā in his right hand to strike Śāla on his head, and with his other hand he has caught the wrestler by his waist. The wrestler also defends himself with a gadā.¹

At the court of Kamsa, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were asked to wrestle with the well-known wrestlers of the court. In no time Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma killed both of them.²

The wrestling scene is depicted on an 8th century panel at Paharpur where Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, identifiable from their typical hair style and short tunics, are shown engaged in a duel with two other persons. On the right side of the panel one of them clasps the wrestler tightly by his hand and to the left of the panel the defeated recumbent wrestler is seized by his neck and his leg.³

The episode is also illustrated on the south face of the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho.⁴

Ultimately comes the turn of Kamsa, whom Kṛṣṇa seizes by his hair and kills him.⁵ The only probable represen-

1. Krishna Deva, op. cit., Pl. XXXII, fig. 7.

2. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, X, 44.

3. Saraswati S.K., op.cit. (Early Sculpture of Bengal). Pl.V, fig. 15.

4. Krishna Deva, op.cit., Pl. XXXI, fig. 2.

5. Harivamśa, II, 30; Bhāgavata Purāṇa, X, 45.

tation of Kamsa-vadha is on a very mutilated panel at the Dasāvatāra temple of Deogarh. Only the hand holding a human head by its hair is preserved.¹

The childhood feats of Kṛṣṇa are over with the death of Kamsa. His later life is generally not depicted in stone. A 5th century panel from Garhwa, preserved in the collection of the Lucknow Museum, represents Kṛṣṇa witnessing the fight between Bhīma and Jarāsaṅgha. Kṛṣṇa is shown holding the four usual emblems of Viṣṇu. To his right is a mutilated figure of Arjuna with a bow and arrow in his hands. To the left of Kṛṣṇa are Bhīma and Jarāsaṅgha engaged in a fight. Bhīma has grasped with his hand the neck of Jarāsaṅgha and his left leg is thrown round his waist. The slab might have provided a panel in any temple. (fig. 47).

Strangely enough the exploits of Kṛṣṇa with the gopīs generally are not found before the late mediaeval period. The terracotta panel from Rangamahā published by Goetz probably illustrates the Dāna-līlā.² The sculptures on a panel at the Paharpur temple can be identified as Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā, but not Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.³

The survey in the foregoing pages would show that the images of Kṛṣṇa till the mediaeval period are more illustrative reliefs than static cult images. Excepting the evolution in the stylistic features, there are no iconographic emblems

1. Vats M.S., op. cit. Pl. XXI c.

2. Goetz Hermann, op. cit. Pl. 6.

3. Saraswati S.K., op. cit. Pl. III, fig. 10.

particularly attributed to Kṛṣṇa. The tendency is always to show him as a child with the vyāghranakha, still in use for children in India, and the Kākapakṣa style of hair, falling down on the shoulders in the shape of crow's feathers. Though he is recognized as an incarnation of Viṣṇu very rarely do we see him having four hands. He is depicted as the most human of all the incarnations.

Several incidents of the life story of Kṛṣṇa are variously portrayed on the panels on the Daśavatāra temple, in the 7th century temple at Sirpur, on the 8th century panels of the Paharpur temple and in the 10th century Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho. In the first three examples there is hardly any attempt to show Kṛṣṇa in a different age group, whereas in the Lakṣmaṇa temple Kṛṣṇa is shown as an infant in his feats of very early age, and in later incidents he is more matured and advancing towards his teens and hence he wears the mukuta and other ornaments also.

Apart from these, the texts on religion and iconography also describe Kṛṣṇa in his various other aspects. Kṛṣṇa is described as accompanied by his wives Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā, in the Viṣṇudharmottaram¹ and the Vaikhānasāgama.² The Vaikhānasāgama depicts Kṛṣṇa as Pārthasarathi, riding a

1. Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 74-75.

2. Vaikhānasāgama, Paṭala, 60. p. 203.

chariot with Arjuna. In his left hand he should hold the reins and his right hand should be in the añjali-mudrā.¹ The Bhāgavata Purāṇa refers to Kṛṣṇa having four hands, holding the usual four emblems Viṣṇu and adorned with ornaments.² As in sculptures, the dalliance of Kṛṣṇa with the gopīs hardly forms the subject of the early texts on iconography. The Padma Purāṇa gives a brief description of Kṛṣṇa and a gopī under a Kadamba tree. Kṛṣṇa has placed one of his hands on her shoulder.³ The Śilparatna also describes him surrounded by gopas and gopīs.⁴ Such images are known only from the late mediaeval period. One such image of Kṛṣṇa Veṇugopāla flanked by several gopas and gopīs has been found at Jogishahi.⁵ The image is two-handed playing upon the flute. There is a group of gopīs to his right and other gopas to the left. Below on the panel are also some animals and other figures worshipping him. An eight-handed image of Veṇugopāla has come to light from Kathial in north Punjab, belonging to about the 12th century.

The eight-handed variety of Kṛṣṇa image, described in the Harivamśa, holds the sword, the disc, the mace, the arrow,

-
1. Vaikhānasāgama, Pātala 60 p. 204.
 2. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, X, 70, 2-5.
 3. Padma Purāṇa, Pātāla khaṇḍa, 28, 2-4.
 4. Śilparatna, Uttarabhāga, 23, 38. p. 131.
 5. Das G.S., "A Unique Image", Indian Culture, Vol. VI, No. 4, April 1940. Pl. opp. p. 408.

the carma (hide), the sārṅga (the bow) and the conch.¹

A Kṛṣṇa image in the Yogamudrā is referred to in the Silparatna. He is in a gorgeously decorated Mandapa in the city of Dvaravati, holding the disc, the conch, the lotus, and the mace, with a pair of hands holding the flute and the other two are in the Yogamudrā.²

The cult that centred round the worship of Śrīnāthajī or Bālagopāla etc. was of a much later origin, mostly patronized by Vallabhites in Western India. The Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa worship was mainly influenced by Kavi Jayadeva and later on by Chaitanya. These two great exponents of Vaiṣṇavism - Vallabha and Chaitṇya - contributed very much to enhance the influence of Kṛṣṇa worship in India in various forms.

Balarāma: The Vīra worship of Vāsudeva and Saṅkarṣaṇa was transformed into the worship of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma as incarnations of Viṣṇu. Balarāma does not acquire a prominent place among the avatāras, nevertheless he is an important member of the Catur Vyūha.

The worship of Balarāma has been greatly influenced by Nāga worship. In fact he is considered to be an incarnation of Śeṣa himself in the Mahābhārata. In him we see the blending of the Lord of the snakes and the lord of beings, indicated

1. Harivamśa, II, 122, 4-5.

2. Silparatna, Uttarabhāga, 23, 38, p. 131.

by a fine incident related in the Harivamśa. Once when Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and Akrūra were going to Mathura in a chariot, Akrūra wished to pay his homage to the Lord of the nāgas in the river Jumna. Akrūra dived down into the world of snakes. In the middle of it he saw the Lord of serpents with a thousand hoods. He carried a ploughshare and a pestle. He was adorned with one earring and intoxicated, he slept. He was attended upon by several nāgas and nāgis. In his lap was seated Ghanaśyāma or Viṣṇu, dark in complexion and wearing yellow garments.¹

It may be noted in this connection that the early images of Balarāma are exactly similar to the nāga images. The only distinguishing point between them is the presence of the Vanamālā on the figure of Balarāma.

The image of Balarāma, as described by various texts, invariably holds a ploughshare and a pestle. The Brhat Samhitā² says that Baladeva should have a ploughshare in his hand. He should be shown with protruding eyes indicating his inebriety. He should wear one earring and his body should be white like a conchshell, lily or moon. The Viṣṇudharmottaram gives two descriptions of Balarāma - one in his vyūha aspect and the other in his vibhāva or incarnatory aspect. In his

1. Harivamśa, II, 26, 48-58.

2. Brhat Samhitā, LVI, 36.

vyūha form he should be sculptured as Vāsudeva, having one head and four hands. In his two hands he holds the ploughshare and the pestle instead of the mace and the disc. He should be fair in complexion wearing blue garments.¹ Another description attributes to him only two hands holding the ploughshare and the pestle. His eyes are intoxicated. He is fair in complexion wearing blue garments and is adorned with earrings.²

According to the Agni Purāṇa the image of Balarāma can be either two-handed or four-handed. The two-handed image should hold the mace and the ploughshare, whereas the four-handed variety has the conch and the pestle in his two additional hands.³ It is surprising that none of these texts mentions the canopy of the serpent-hood which is invariably found with the image of Balarāma.

Balarāma worship can be traced back to a couple of centuries before the Christian era, justified by the extant

1. Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 57, 36.

2. Ibid., III, 85, 73.

If the correct reading is चैव कुण्डली instead of

चैव कुण्डली the description tallies more with the one given in Bṛhatsamhitā.

Even in the Mahābhārata, the emblem of Balarāma is hala and a मुसल.¹

1. Mahābhārata, III, 119, 10-240.

V, 3, 44.

XIII, 147, 630.

3. Agni Purāṇa, 49, 6-7.

images. But it is rather difficult to decide whether these early images represent the vyūha or the vibhāva aspect.

One of the earliest images of Balarāma found in Mathura is preserved in the collection of the Lucknow Museum. Balarāma is standing under the canopy of a serpent hood, holding the ploughshare and the pestle, which rest against his shoulders. His right leg is slightly bent at the knee. The image can safely be dated to the 1st century B.C.¹

An image of Balarāma datable to the 1st century B.C. has also come to light in the Adikesvara Ghāt in Benaras and is now preserved in the collection of Bharat Kala Bhavan (No. 279). The mutilated image has preserved only the serpent-hood. There is a small lion face attached to the end of the pestle which probably signifies the banner.

There are a number of Balarāma images preserved in the collection of the Mathura Museum, showing the same iconographic features. Balarāma, standing under the serpent-hood, holds the pestle in his left hand and the right hand is raised up to rest on the snake-hood, sometimes holding the wine flask, indicating his fondness for intoxicating liquor.

An interesting image of Balarāma datable to the 5th century has come to light from Indhar and is now preserved

1. Agrawal V.S., op.cit., JISOA. Pl. XIV, fig. 4.

in the collection of the Gwalior Museum. Balarāma is standing under the canopy of a five-hooded serpent. In his upper left hand he holds the ploughshare and in the lower left the wine flask. The upper right hand is resting upon the serpent-hood and the lower right is placed on his waist. Generally, Balarāma has two hands but this is an early four-handed image of Balarāma.¹

The 8th century image from Paharpur is one of the finest specimens of Balarāma's images. He has four hands, the upper right and the left bearing respectively the pestle and the ploughshare, the lower right holds the wine cup and the lower left is akimbo. He is surmounted by the seven-hooded canopy of a snake. To his right is a female attendant holding a wine glass and the wine-pot - so very dear to Balarāma. The male attendant to the left holds a fly whisk.²

A similar image is preserved in the collection of the Varendra Research Society at Rajashahi, belonging to about the 11th century.³ The four-handed images of Balarama are also known from Nalanda and Kurkihar. The image from Nalanda shows Balarāma canopied by the serpent-hood, holding the ploughshare, the pestle, the sweet ball and the wine flask.⁴

-
1. Annual Administrative Report of the Department of Archaeology, Gwalior State, for the Year 1929. Pl. IV d.
 2. Saraswati S.K., op.cit., Pl. III, fig. 10.
 3. Ibid., p. 57.
 4. Banerjee R.D., Eastern Indian School of Mediaeval Sculpture. Pl. I, 6.

The Kurkihar image is similar to the Nalanda bronze but is slightly mutilated.¹

A four-handed image has also come to light from Baroda. The image is a fine specimen of the 9th century art.²

One interesting image is on a projecting pillar of the temple No. 7 at Orian. It represents Balarāma seated on Garuḍa under the canopy of a five-hooded cobra. He holds in his upper hands the ploughshare and the mace, one of the lower hands holds the conch and the other is held near the chest in the jñānamudrā. The significance lies mainly in the fact that it represents Balarāma in his vyūha aspect, which is clearly indicated by the adjoining figure of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa. Besides the representation of Balarāma on Garuḍa is very rare.³

Balarāma is sometimes accompanied by Revati his consort. The one from ^{Sian} ~~Orian~~ is on the outer wall of a subsidiary shrine near Sachia Mata temple.

The image, canopied by a five-hooded serpent, holds in the right hands the ploughshare and the wine flask. In his upper left he holds the pestle and with his lower left hand

1. JISOA, Vol. II. Pl. XXVIII, 1.

2. Annual Administration Report of the Department of Archaeology, Gwalior State, for the Year 1933-34.

3. Bhandarkar, Temples of Osian. ASIAR. 1908-09, p. 106.



he clasps his consort to his bosom.

A similar image of Balarāma and Revatī is preserved in the Rajputana Museum at Ajmer. He holds his usual emblems in his three hands, the lower left is akimbo instead of embracing Revatī. She is standing by his side holding a lotus and probably a wine flask. An identical image is also preserved in the same Museum.¹

Balarāma and Revatī in the ālingana-mudrā are preserved in a niche of the Pārs̥vnātha temple at Khajuraho. Balarāma, under the seven serpent-hood, holds in his upper two hands the plough and the kamandalu, the lower right is akimbo and the lower left embraces Revatī. Revatī holds a lotus in her one hand and the other embraces Balarāma. The image is carved in the tribhanga posture.³

In the mythology of Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma has an important role to play as an elder brother of Kṛṣṇa. He supports and helps him in many of his exploits against the demons. One of the exploits of Balarāma is the destruction of Pralambāsura,⁴ who came to participate in their sports, and skillfully carried away Balarāma high up in the sky assuming a huge body.

1. Bhandarkar, op.cit., p. 104.

2. Dave K.B., op.cit., p. 220.

3. Avasthi Ramasraya, Tripathagā, Vol. XII No. 1 p. 50.

4. Harivamśa, II, 14, p. 41.

Balarāma, inspired by Kṛṣṇa, miraculously increased his weight and brought him down to the earth, sitting on his shoulders. A terracotta plaque of the 6th century preserved in the Allahabad Museum, illustrates the episode. A recumbent demon, evidently Pralamba, is seen being trampled upon by Balarāma who is seated on his shoulders. Kṛṣṇa, standing to their right, is witnessing the feat of Balarāma. Both Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma have their hair tied up in a knot and their look is very much like little children. (fig. 47).

Another panel illustrating the same episode is still preserved on the temple at Paharpur, referred to by S.K. Saraswati.¹ A huge figure of the demon is carrying away the child Balarāma. To his right is standing Kṛṣṇa with a flute in his hand.

Another demon who was destined to be destroyed by Balarāma was Dhenuka who jealously guarded the forest of Tāla (palm) in the form of an ass. Once Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma and the cowherds went there and desired to taste a ripe fruit. Balarāma started shaking down the fruit and consequently the demon Dhenuka rushed to the site to hit Balarāma. He tried to hit Balarāma with his hind legs. Balarāma caught hold of them and hurled him in the air and threw him dead on the palm-tree.² On the topmost panel of the famous pillar at

1. Saraswati S.K., op.cit., p. 83, fig. 30.

2. Harivamśa, II, IB. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa attributed it to Kṛṣṇa.

Mandor is seen Balarāma standing under a palm-tree, catching hold of a mutilated animal, probably the donkey.¹

A fanpalm capital with the headless figure of the donkey in front, preserved in the Gwalior Museum, depicts Dhenuka-vadha in the opinion of Dr. Banerjee. Besides the association of the Dhenuka-vadha episode in the palm-grove, the palm is associated with Balarāma, who was very fond of its intoxicating liquor.² If the identification be correct, this is one of the earliest documents of a mythological representation of Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma, dating to the 1st century A.D. A similar representation is also preserved in the collection of the Lucknow Museum.³

The life of Balarāma is tainted with the sin of murdering an ascetic. Once when he went to visit Naimiṣāranya, all the ascetics there gave him a hearty welcome and paid due respect to him, but Suta Lomaharṣana who occupied the highest position, did not even get up from his seat to show respect. Balarāma, thus insulted, killed him with a blade of Kuśa grass.⁴ The incident is probably depicted on the projecting panel at the entrance of the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Sirpur dated in the 6th century A.D. Suta Lomaharṣana is seen seated on a small pedestal and Balarāma to his right has

1. Bhandarkar, op.cit., p. 138, fig. 2.

2. Banerjee J.N., Development of Hindu Iconography. p. 423.

3. Ibid., p. 424.

4. Bhāgavata Purāna, X, 78.

raised up his ploughshare with both of his hands to kill him.¹ An 8th century panel from Dholpur, preserved in the collection of the Bharat Kala Bhavan is a vivid illustration of the same episode. Lomaharṣana is sitting in lalitāsana on a small stool with one of his hands resting on his knee. To his left is Balarāma with his feet wide apart, attacking Lomaharṣana on his neck with his ploughshare held up in both of his hands. To the right of Lomaharṣana is a kneeling female figure, probably his wife mourning his death. An attendant is standing behind her.²

A panel on the south wall of the Lakṣmaṇa temple at Khajuraho also depicts the same scene. Balarāma is here represented under the canopy of a snake-hood. He holds his ploughshare in his upper right hand.³

The Brhatsamhitā as well as the Viṣṇudharmottaram refer to the images of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma flanking the image of Ekānāmśā. The Brhatsamhitā says that the goddess Ekānāmśā should be carved between Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, with her left hand resting on her hip and the right hand holding the lotus. If she is four-handed, she holds in her left hands the book and the lotus and one of her right hand holds the rosary and the other is in the varadamudrā. If she is eight-armed, she holds in her left hands the kamandalu, the

1. ASIAR., 1909-10. Pl. II.

2. Krishan Deva, op. cit. Pl. XXXI, fig. 1

3. Ibid., p. 83.

bow, the lotus and the book and in her three right hands the arrow, the mirror, the rosary, the fourth one is in the varāda-mudrā.¹ The Viṣṇudharmottaram simply says that the goddess Ekānamsā is placed between Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, with her left hand on her waist and her right hand holding a lotus.²

Not many images of this kind have come to light. A huge image of Ekānamsā flanked by Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa has been found in Gaya, and a part of it is preserved in the Patna Museum. The huge figure, belonging to the 3rd century A.D. must have occupied a panel of a temple dedicated to Vāsudeva.

One beautiful piece is also preserved in the collection of the Lucknow Museum (No. 9.58). The goddess, holding a lotus, is flanked by Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, both of them having four hands. Balarāma holds in his right hands the wine flask and the ploughshare, his left hands are broken. Kṛṣṇa, standing to the left of the goddess, holds the mace and the conch in his right hands and the left ones are broken. There are two small attendant figures below the hands of the goddess. The panel is datable to the 8th century A.D.³

1. Brhatsamhitā, LVIII, 37-39.

2. Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 85.

3. Pandey D.P., Identification of a Sculpture in the Provincial Museum, Lucknow, JBORS, Vol. XXVII, Part I. Pl. I.

Balarāma seems to have acquired importance in the early period, but he does not figure as an important incarnation of Viṣṇu. He has always remained subordinate to Kṛṣṇa, as is evident from the scattered images of Balarāma.

BUDDHA

Buddha was added to the list of the incarnations of Viṣṇu only after the Gupta period and is not found sculptured except on the Daśavatāra panels. Though several Purāṇas¹ refer to Buddha as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, very little importance is attached to him.

The image of Buddha does not carry any of the Vaiṣṇava emblems according to the injunction of Agni Purāṇa. He has a very benign and calm appearance, long ears and a halo behind him. He is seated on a high lotus pedestal and his hands are in the abhaya and the varaḍa-mudrā.² The term "ūrdhva padma" is significant as the images of Yoga Nārāyaṇa are sometimes shown to be seated on a high lotus with a long lotus stalk beneath, a characteristic which is very peculiar of some Buddhist images. It may merely be conjectured that the sculptor might have tried to represent Buddha incarnation through the image of Yoga Nārāyaṇa.

-
1. Matsya Purāṇa, 47, 247; Agni Purāṇa, 16; Bhāgavata Purāṇa, 1, 3, 24, etc.
 2. Agni Purāṇa, 49, 8.

KALKI

Kalki is a future incarnation who is still to appear at the end of the Kali Age.¹ According to the prediction of the Agni Purāṇa, he will be holding the bow and the arrow, or may be riding a horse holding the sword, the conch and the disc and the mace.² The Kalki incarnation is generally found, in the Daśavatāra panels, seated on the horse holding a sword.

1. Bhāgavata Purāṇa, I, 3, 26.

2. Agni Purāṇa, 49, 9.

HAYAGRĪVA

Hayagrīva, though a very minor incarnation of Viṣṇu, has a very ancient origin. In the Mahābhārata, Hayaśīras is specifically used for Viṣṇu¹ and Kṛṣṇa.² Viṣṇu is supposed to have rescued the Vedas stolen by the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha.³ He is also known as Hayamukha.

In the Viṣṇudharmottaram⁴ Hayagrīva is a form of Saṃkar-sana. He should be represented as a god having the head of a horse. He should be shown wearing a blue garment and should have a smiling face. His feet should be placed in the hands of the image of earth. He has eight hands. In four of his hands he holds a conch, a wheel, a mace and a lotus. The rest of the hands should be placed on the four personified Vedas.

Not many images of Hayagrīva are found. Three mediaeval images have been preserved in the Kotah Museum. One is a four handed standing image with the face of a horse. The lower right hand is in the varada-mudrā, the upper right holds the mace, the upper left holds the book and the lower left holds kamaṇḍalu. Another image is also similar to this.⁵

1. Mahābhārata, V, 97, 5.

2. Ibid., XII, 330, 36.

3. Ibid., XII, 335, 22-72.

4. Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 7.

5. Agrawal R.C., Three Unique & Unpublished Sculptures of Hayagrīva from Rajasthan, JOI, Vol. XI. No.3. pp. 281-282.

It seems that the Hayagrīva worship was acknowledged only by a narrow group of people. His worship must have been prevalent in Rajasthan, for only Rajasthan has produced his images, as far as the present discoveries go.

NARA NĀRĀYAṆA

It has already been stated before the worship of Nara-Nārāyaṇa must have been prevalent in and before the Gupta period. The Mahābhārata glorifies Nara-Nārāyaṇa to a very great extent and also mentions the location of their āśrama at Badarī. They are supposed to have taken the birth in order to help the needy. Nara-Nārāyaṇa are always worshipped together and later on they are identified with Kṛṣṇa-Arjuna.

The only reference to the iconography of Nara-Nārāyaṇa is found in the Viṣṇudharmottaram. Viṣṇudharmottaram also identifies Nara-Nārāyaṇa with Hari-Kṛṣṇa. "The colour of Nara is greenish like the dūrvā grass. He has two hands while Nārāyaṇa has four hands. Nārāyaṇa is coloured like the petal of a blue lotus.

Between these two should be made Badarī bearing fruit. Under the Badaru in a charming vehicle having eight wheels drawn by the elements (bhūta) should be made standing the two - Nara and Nārāyaṇa. Both of them carry rosaries, wear antelope skins and have matted locks of hair. With one of the feet in the chariot and the other behind it, Hari should be made like Nara or Narendra while Kṛṣṇa should be made like Nārāyaṇa¹."

The only known image of Nara-Nārāyaṇa has survived on the wall of the Daśavatāra temple at Deogarh. They are seated on

1. Viṣṇudharmottaram, III, 76.



two pedestals, Nara having only two hands is on the left and Nārāyaṇa having four hands is to the right. They are shown to be sitting under a tree. Nara has his right hand in the varada-mudrā and the left hand in the abhaya-mudrā. Nārāyaṇa holds the rosary and the lotus in his two upper hands and the kamaṇḍalu in his lower left hand. His lower right hand is in the vyākhyāna-mudrā. There are flying gāndharvas and in between the trees and Brahmā on the top. Lion and antelopes are seen below their pedestals.¹

The original image in the shrine of Badarīnātha was probably that of Nārāyaṇa with two hands in the dhyāna-mudrā. Nothing definite can be said about it because the available photograph is not clear.

Nara-Nārāyaṇa worship seems to have become quite insignificant after the Gupta period.

1. Vats M.S., Gupta Temple at Deogarh, MAI, No. 70. Pl. XI.

EPILOGUE

An analytical survey of the iconography of Viṣṇu at once makes it clear that originally Viṣṇuism was quite different from what we see at present. The religion which started over two thousand years ago naturally passes through different phases of evolution which are clearly reflected in its iconography.

Viṣṇuism started with hero worship and culminated in the deification of the "five heroes". Viṣṇuism in its initial stages consisted of a simple ritual worship of these deified heroes, the principal ones of whom was identified with the vedic god Viṣṇu. Consequently Vāsudeva only came to be worshipped as Viṣṇu in the Gupta period, with a particular iconographical pattern. The worship of this four-handed Viṣṇu dominated the field of religion in Northern India.

Later on, with the expansion of the cult and increased symbolisms, the worship of the four-handed Viṣṇu became more elaborate and complex. He was conceived to have twenty-four different forms, only a few of which were commonly worshipped in the mediaeval period. Side by side evolved a new iconographic form with multiple hands and emblems.

Besides this commonly accepted form of Viṣṇu, the vyūha theory, born after the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy, also asserted its hold on the worshippers of Viṣṇu. The Vaikunṭha Caturmūrti, representing principles of the Sāṅkhya cosmological theory, came to exist in the Gupta period, but its strong hold is perceptible only in the 9th-10th centuries in the extreme

north in Kashmir and Chamba. The vyūha aspect of Viṣṇu had influenced this part very much and the cult might have ended even in Tantric worship. This form, which was known in Kashmir and to some extent in U.P., shows an offshoot in a very elaborate form in Rajasthan in the later mediaeval period.

The other forms of Viṣṇu, though accepted and worshipped by the people, did not acquire a very prominent position. The Nara-Nārāyaṇa form seems to have attracted the attention of a group of people in the Gupta period, but did not last long enough to prevail further.

The incarnations of Viṣṇu have a history of their own. Amongst the ten of them, the earlier period witnesses the prominence of Varāha, Nṛsimha and to a small degree Vāmana. In fact, in the initial stages, Varāha and Nṛsimha are the only incarnations that were commonly accepted. It can be said that in and after the Gupta period, Varāha and Nṛsimha exerted as strong an influence as Viṣṇu himself. Their worship persisted upto the mediaeval period, when both of them had formed the separate cults of their own, gaining an independent position.

It is significant that the human incarnations of Viṣṇu, whose worship overshadowed the Varāha and Nṛsimha cults in the later period by forming different cults and sects of their own, have a negligible role to play in the early history of Viṣṇuism.

APPENDIX I

CATURVIMSĀTIMŪTIS OF VIṢṆU (The Order of Emblems)

Name	Padma Purāṇa IV, 79	Rūpa- maṇḍana adh. V	Pārameśvara Samhitā. Kriyakāṇḍa, 23, 72-78	Ahīrbudhnyā Samhitā. 26, 33-46
1. Keśava	SCGP	PSCG	PSCG	PSCG
2. Nārāyaṇa	PGCS	SPGC	SCGP	SPGC
3. Mādhava	CSPG	GCSP	PGSC	PGSC
4. Govinda	GPSC	CGPS	CGSP	CGSP
5. Viṣṇu	SCPG	GPSC	GPSC	GPSC
6. Madhusūdana	SPGC	CSPG	CSPG	CSPG
7. Trivikrama	GCSP	PGCS	CGPS	CGPS
8. Vāmana	CGPS	SCGP	SCGP	SCGP
9. Śrīdhara	CPSG	PCGS	PCGS	PCGS
10. Hṛṣīkeśa	CGSP	GCPS	GCSP	GCSP
11. Padmanābha	PSGC	SPCG	GPCS	SPGC
12. Dāmodara	SGCP	PSGC	PSGC	PSGC
13. Saṁkarṣaṇa	SPCG	GSPC		
14. Vāsudeva	CSGP	GSCP		
15. Pradyumna	SCGP	CSGP		
16. Aniruddha	GSPC	CGSP		
17. Puruṣottama	PSGC	CPSG		
18. Adhokṣaja	GSCP	PGSC		
19. Nṛsimha	PGSC	CPGS		
20. Acyuta	PCSG	GPCS		
21. Janārdana	-	PCSG		
22. Upendra	-	SGCP		
23. Hari	-	SCPG		
24. Kṛṣṇa	GPCS	SGPC		

Abbreviations:- S = śankha, P = padma, G = gada, C = cakra.
The order of emblems starts from the lower right hand in the clockwise direction.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

SANSKRIT SOURCES:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Agni Purāṇa, | Anandasram Sanskrit Series, | Poona, 1900. |
| Ahirbudhṇya Samhitā, | (ed.) Schrader O.F., | Madras, 1916. |
| Aitereya Brāhmaṇa, | (tr.) Keith A.B., | Cambridge, 1920. |
| Aparājitapṛcchā, | Gaekwad Oriental Series, | Baroda, 1950. |
| Atharva Veda, | (tr.) Whitney W.D., | Cambridge, 1905. |
| Atharva Veda, | (ed.) Satavalekar S.D. | Paradi, 1957. |
| Atri Samhitā, | (ed.) Raghunath & Kavi, | Tirupati, 1943. |
| Bhāgavata Purāṇa, | Nirnaya Sagar Press, | Bombay, 1916. |
| Brhad Brahma Samhitā, | Anandasrama Sanskrit Series, | Poona, 1912. |
| Brhaddevatā, | (ed.) Macdonell A.A., | Delhi, 1965. |
| Brhat Samhitā, | (tr.) Sastri V.S., | Bangalore, 1947. |
| Caturvarga | Bibliotheca Indica Series. | Calcutta, 1878. |
| Cintāmaṇi, | (ed.) Dr. Moti Chandra, | Bombay, 1959. |
| Caturbhāṇi, | | |
| Devatāmūrti | | |
| Prakarana & | (ed.) Sankhya Tirtha V.M., | Calcutta, 1936. |
| Rūpamaṇḍana, | (ed.) Kak & Shastri | Srinagar, 1934. |
| Gāndharva Tantra, | (ed.) Chattopadhyaya K.C., | Varanasi, 1959. |
| Garga Samhitā, | (ed.) Mitra & Vidyabhusana, | Calcutta, 1872. |
| Gopatha Brāhmaṇa, | (ed.) Jinasena Suri, | Poona, 1930. |
| Harivamśa Purāṇa, | | |
| Īśānasīva Gurudeva | Trivandrum Sanskrit Series, | Trivandrum, 1920. |
| Paddhati (Īśānasīva), | Gaekwadi Oriental Series, | Baroda, 1931. |
| Jayākhyā Samhitā, | Venkatesvara Press, | Bombay, 1908. |
| Kālikā Purāṇa, | | |
| Kapīṣṭhala Kāṭha | (ed.) Dr. Raghu Vira, | Lahore, 1932. |
| Samhitā, | | |

Kaus̥itaki Brāhmaṇa,	(tr.) Keith A.B.,	Cambridge, 1920.
Kūrma Purāṇa,	Venkatesvara Press,	Bombay, 1927.
Mahābhārata,	Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, Poona,	1927-64.
Mahānārāyaṇa Upani- ṣad,	(ed.) Col. G.A. Jacob,	Bombay, 1888.
Mānasollāsa,	Gaekwad Oriental Series,	Baroda, 1939.
Matsya Purāṇa,	Anandasrama Sanskrit Series,	Poona, 1907.
Meru Tantra,	Venkatesvara Press,	Bombay, 1904.
Nāradiya Mahāpurāṇa,	Venkatesvara Press,	Bombay, 1905.
Padma Purāṇa,	Anandasrama Sanskrit Series.	Poona 1893-94.
Parama Samhitā,	Gaekwad Oriental Series,	Baroda, 1930.
Pārameśvara Samhitā,		Srinagar, 1953.
Purascharyārṇava,	(ed.) The Murlidhara,	Varanasi, 1901.
Paurāṇakarma	Jagat Samachar Press	Thana, n.d.
Ramayana 5 Vols.	(ed) Bhatt G.H.	Baroda.
R̥g. Veda,	Vedic Samsodhan Mandala 4 Vols.,	Poona 1933-46.
	(tr.) Griffith R.T.H., 2 Vols.	Banaras, 1896 -1897.
Rūpamaṇḍana,	q.v.	Calcutta, 1936.
Rājatarāṅgiṇī,	(ed) Shastri P.R.	Kashi, 1960.
Satapatha Brāhmaṇa,	(tr.) Eggeling J., (Sacred Book of the East),	Oxford, 1882 -1900.
Samarāṅgaṇa Sūtra- dhāra,	Gaekwad Oriental Series,	Baroda, 1925.
Sāradātilaka,	(ed.) Pandit M.J.B.,	Varanasi, 1934.
Sāttvata Samhitā,	(ed.) P.B. Chariar Anantta,	Kanchi, 1902.
Sāttvata Tantram,	Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series.	Varanasi, 1934.
Skanda Purāṇa,	Venkatesvara Press,	Bombay, 1909.

Sri Tattvanidhi,	Venkatesvara Press,	Bombay,
Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa, (ed.) Mitra R.,		Calcutta, 1885-1870.
Taittiriya Samhitā, (ed.) Ananta Shastri,		Aundh, 1945.
Tantra Rahasya,	Gaekwad Oriental Series,	Baroda, 1923.
Tantrasāra,	Nirnaya Sagar Press,	Bombay, 1918.
Vaikhānasāgama,	Trivandrum Sanskrit Series,	Trivandrum, 1935.
Vājasaneyī Samhitā,	Nirnaya Sagar Press,	Bombay, 1921.
Vāmana Purāṇa,	Venkatesvara Press,	Bombay, 1929.
Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa,	Gaekwad Oriental Series,	Baroda, 1958.
Viṣṇu Purāṇa,	(tr.) Wilson H.H.,	London, 1840.

MODERN WORKS

Agrawal Urmila,	Khajuraho Sculptures and Their Significance.	Delhi, 1964.
Agrawal V.S.,	Indian Art.	Varanasi, 1965.
	Matsya Purāṇa - A Study	Varanasi, 1963.
	Vāmana Purāṇa - A Study.	Varanasi, 1964..
Allan J.,	A Catalogue of Indian Coins in the British Museum.	London, 1936.
Altekar, A.S.,	Coinage of the Gupta Empire.	Benaras, 1957.
Ashton L., (ed.)	The Art of India and Pakistan.	London, 1960.
Bacchofer L.,	Early Indian Sculpture.	Paris, 1929
Bajpai K.D.,	Sagar through the Ages.	Sagar, 1964.
Banerjea J.N.,	Development of Hindu Iconography. (2nd ed.)	Calcutta, 1956.
	Pañcopāsana. (in Bengali)	Calcutta, 1960.
Banerji R.D.,	The Eastern School of Mediaeval Sculpture in India.	Delhi, 1933.
Bhandarkar R.G.,	Vaisnavism, Saivism and Other Minor Sects.	Strassburg, 1913.
Bhattacharya B.C.,	Indian Images.	Calcutta, 1954.
Bhattacharya N.K.,	Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum.	Dacca, 1929.
Bulcke C.,	Rāma Kathā (Hindi)	Prayag, 1962.
Burgess & Cousens	Architectural Antiquities of Northern Gujarat.	London, 1903.
Cousens H.,	Somnath and Other Mediaeval Temples in Kathiawad.	Calcutta, 1931.
Coomaraswamy A.K.,	Yakshas.	Washington, 1928.
	History of Indian and Indonesian Art.	London, 1927.

Danielou Alain,	Hindu Polytheism.	London, 1964.
Dave K.B.,	Gujerāt nu Mūrti Vidhān.	Ahmedabad, 1963.
De Sushil Kumar	Early History of Vaisnava Faith in Bengal.	Calcutta, 1942.
Dik ^{sh} it M.G.,	Sirpur and Rajim Temples.	Bombay, 1960.
Goetz Hermann,	Early Wooden Temples of Chamba.	Leiden, 1955.
	The Art and Architecture of Bikaner State.	Oxford, 1950.
Gonda J.,	Aspects of Early Visnuism.	Utrecht, 1954.
Gupta P.L.,	Catalogue of the Patna Museum.	Patna, 1965.
Hopkins E.W.,	Religions of India.	Boston, 1895.
Keith A.B.,	Mythology of All Races. Vol.VI. Indian and Iranian.	New York, 1964.
Khare G.H.,	Mūrti Viṣṇāna. (Marathi)	Poona, 1939.
Kramrisch Stella	The Art of India.	London, 1954.
	Indian Sculpture.	Calcutta, 1933.
	Indian Art Through the Ages.	London, 1954.
	The Art of Nepal.	Vienna, 1964.
	The Hindu Temple.	Calcutta, 1946.
Macdonell A.A.,	Vedic Mythology.	Varanasi, 1963.
Nilkanth	History of Sanskrit Literature,	London, 1928.
Mukherjee R.,	The Culture and Art of India.	London, 1960.
Munshi, Goswami and others.	Indian Temple Sculpture.	Delhi, 1956.
Pramod Chandra	Master Bronzes of India.	Chicago, 1965.
Rambash P.,	The Golden Age of Indian Art.	Bombay, 1955.
Rao T.A.G.,	Elements of Hindu Iconography. 4 Vols I.	Madras, 1914.
Rayachaudhari H.C.	Early History of Vaisnava Sect. 2nd Edition.	Calcutta, 1926.

Renou L.,	Religions of India.	London, 1953.
Rowland B.,	Art and Architecture of India.	Cambridge, 1933.
Sankalia H.D.,	Architecture of Gujarat.	Bombay, 1941.
Saraswati S.K.,	Early Sculpture of Bengal.	Calcutta, 1962.
	A Survey of Indian Sculpture.	Calcutta, 1954.
Satya Prakash,	Round the Museum - Jaipur.	<i>Jaipur, 1951.</i>
Schrader (F.O.),	Introduction to the Panca- ratra Ahirbudnya Samhita.	Madras, 1916.
Shah U.P.,	Sculptures from Sāmlāji & Roda	<i>Baroda, 1960.</i>
Sircar D.C.,	Select Inscriptions.	Calcutta, 1942.
Sivaramamurti C.,	Sculptures Inspired by Kalidasa.	Madras, 1942.
	Indian Sculpture.	New Delhi, 1961.
	Indian Bronzes.	Bombay, 1962.
Smith V.A.,	History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon.	Oxford, 1930.
Vogel J. Ph.	Antiquities of Chamba State.	Calcutta, 1911.
	Catalogue of the Archaeolo- gical Museum, Mathura.	Allahabad, 1911.
	Catalogue of the Bhuri Singh Museum, Chamba.	Calcutta, 1909.
Wilson H.H.,	Viṣṇu Purāṇa. (q.v.).	
Winternitz M.,	History of Indian Literature. Vol. III.	Delhi, 1963.
Zimmer H.,	The Art of Indian Asia. I, II.	New York, 1955.

JOURNALS

Abbreviations

Artibus Asiae

Archaeological Survey of India (ASIAR)

Annual Administrative Report of the Archaeological Department, Gwalior State

Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Museum (PWM) of Western India

Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute

Epigraphica Indica (Ep. Ind.)

Indian Art and Letters

Indian Historical Quarterly (IHQ)

Indian Antiquary

Indian Culture

Journal of Gujarat Research Society (JGRS)

Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art (JISOA)

Journal of the University of Bombay

Journal of the Oriental Institute (JOI)

Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society (JBORS)

Journal Indian History

Journal of the U.P. Historical Society (JUPHS)

Lalit Kalā

Marg

Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India (MASI)

Proceedings of the India History Congress

Tripathagā

P L A T E S



Fig. 1. Standing Viṣṇu,
Mathura Museum, 3rd c. A.D.



Back of Fig. 1.



Fig. 2. Standing Viṣṇu,
Allahabad Museum,
5th c. A.D.



Fig. 3. Standing Viṣṇu,
Udayagiri Caves,
6th c. A.D.



Fig. 4. Trivikrama Form of
Viṣṇu, Devangana, 7-8th c.
A.D.



Fig. 5. Trivikrama Form of
Viṣṇu from Dhank, Gandhi
Smriti Museum, Bhavnagar,
7th c. A.D.



Fig. 6. Sridhara Form of
Viṣṇu, Mahant Collection,
Bodh Gaya, 9th c. A.D.



Fig. 7. Adhokṣaja Form of
Viṣṇu, Indian Museum, Cal-
cutta, 9th c. A.D.



Fig. 8. Viṣṇu holding a citron fruit. Indian Museum, Calcutta, 9th c. A.D.



Fig. 9. Viṣṇu holding a citron fruit, Indian Museum, Calcutta, 9th c. A.D.



Fig. 10. Viṣṇu (blowing?) the Conch, Nalanda Museum, 9th c. A.D.



Fig. 11. Viṣṇu with Avalokiteśvara, National Museum, Delhi, 9th c. A.D.



Fig. 12. Viṣṇu Flanked by
Garuda, Lucknow Museum,
9th c. A.D.



Fig. 13. Seated Viṣṇu, Mathura
Museum, 3rd. c. A.D.



Fig. 14. Seated Viṣṇu (in
Kariwarata relief), Deogarh
Fort, 6-7th c. A.D.



Fig. 15. Viṣṇu on Garuda,
Indian Musuem, Calcutta,
9th c. A.D.



Fig. 16. Śeṣasāyī Viṣṇu,
Lucknow Museum,
9-10th c. A. D.



Fig. 17. Śeṣasāyī Viṣṇu
in a Cakra, Bhuvaneshvara
Museum, 10th c. A.D.



Fig. 18. Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa,
Allahabad Museum,
10th c. A.D.



Fig. 19. Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa,
Lucknow Museum,
11th c. A.D.



Fig. 20. Vaikuntha Caturmurti,
Prince of Wales' Museum, Bombay,
9th c. A.D.



Fig. 21. Back of fig. 20.



Fig. 22. Harihara,
Patna Museum, 5th c. A.D.



Fig. 23. Harihara, Mahant
Collection, Bodh Gaya,
9th c. A.D.



Fig. 24. Viṣṇu with the
Dhyāni Buddha on Top,
Asutosh Museum, Calcutta,
9th c. A.D.



Fig. 25. Viṣṇu Under the
Serpent Hood, Bangiya Sahi-
tya Parisad Museum, Calcutta,
9-10th c. A.D.

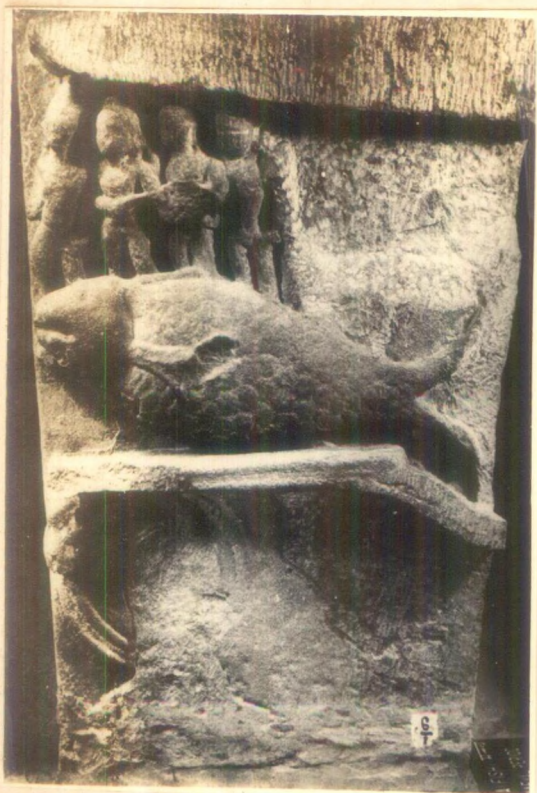


Fig. 26. Matsya-Avatāra,
Gwalior Museum,
8-9th c. A.D.



Fig. 27. Kūrma-Avatāra,
Bharat Kala Bhavan,
Varanasi, 9th c.A.D.



Fig. 28. Varāha-Avatāra,
Mathura Museum,
3rd c. A.D.



Fig. 29. Varāha-Avatāra,
holding a Fish, Devangana,
9th c. A.D.



Fig. 30. Varāha-Avatāra,
Sachia Mata Temple, Osian,
9th c. A.D.



Fig. 31. Varāha-Avatāra
with a Tortoise Under His
Foot, Lucknow Museum, 9th c.
A. D.



Fig. 32. Varāha-Avatāra,
Victoria and Albert Museum,
London, 10th c.A.D.



Fig.33b. Varāha-Avatāra,
Sagar, 5th c. A.D.



Fig.33a. Mahāvarāha,
Sagar, 5th c. A.D.



Fig. 34, Mahāvarāha,
Vijapur, 11th c. A.D.



Fig. 35. Nṛsimha-Avatāra,
Bharat Kala Bhavan,
Varanasi, 6th c. A.D.



Fig. 37. Nṛsimha-Avatāra,
Sirpur, 7th c. A.D.



Fig. 36. Nṛsimha-Avatāra,
Devangana, 9th c. A.D.



Fig. 38. Nṛsimha-Avatāra,
Lucknow Museum, 9th c.A.D.



Fig. 39. Vāmana-Avatāra,
Allahabad Museum,
5th c. A.D.



Fig. 40. Vāmana-Avatāra,
Sanskrit Vidyapith,
Varanasi, 10th c.A.D.



Fig. 41. Trivikrama-Avatāra,
Harihara Temple I,
Osian, 9th c. A. D.



Fig. 42. Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa with
Monkeys, Allahabad Museum,
6th c. A.D.

Fig. 43. Bharata Crossing
the River, Indian Museum,
Calcutta, 8th c. A.D.



Fig. 44. Kāliya Mardana by
Kṛṣṇa, Asodar, 9th c. A.D.

Fig. 45. Kāliya Mardana by Kṛṣṇa,
Asodar, 9th c. A.D.





Fig. 46. Govardhana dhārī Kṛṣṇa,
Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi,
5th c. A.D.

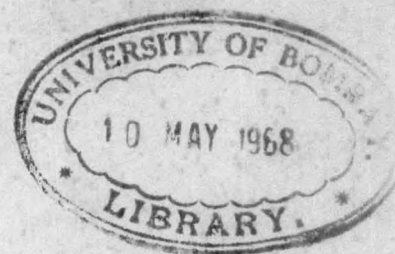


Fig. 47. Pralambāsura vadha,
Allahabad Museum, 5th c. A.D.

EVOLUTION
of the
ICONOGRAPHY OF VISNU
(Northern India upto the Mediaeval Period)

Submitted to the University of Bombay
for Ph. D. Degree by Miss Kalpana S. Desai

1967



3720

PRINCE OF WALES MUSEUM, BOMBAY.

EPILOGUE

An analytical survey of the iconography of Viṣṇu at once makes it clear that originally Viṣṇuism was quite different from what we see at present. The religion which started over two thousand years ago naturally passes through different phases of evolution which are clearly reflected in its iconography.

Viṣṇuism started with hero worship and culminated in the deification of the "five heroes". Viṣṇuism in its initial stages consisted of a simple ritual worship of these deified heroes, the principal ones of whom was identified with the vedic god Viṣṇu. Consequently Vāsudeva only came to be worshipped as Viṣṇu in the Gupta period, with a particular iconographical pattern. The worship of this four-handed Viṣṇu dominated the field of religion in Northern India.

Later on, with the expansion of the cult and increased symbolisms, the worship of the four-handed Viṣṇu became more elaborate and complex. He was conceived to have twenty-four different forms, only a few of which were commonly worshipped in the mediaeval period. Side by side evolved a new iconographic form with multiple hands and emblems.

Besides this commonly accepted form of Viṣṇu, the vyūha theory, born after the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy, also asserted its hold on the worshippers of Viṣṇu. The Vaikunṭha Caturmūrti, representing principles of the Sāṅkhya cosmological theory, came to exist in the Gupta period, but its strong hold is perceptible only in the 9th-10th centuries in the extreme

north in Kashmir and Chamba. The vyūha aspect of Viṣṇu had influenced this part very much and the cult might have ended even in Tantric worship. This form, which was known in Kashmir and to some extent in U.P., shows an offshoot in a very elaborate form in Rajasthan in the later mediaeval period.

The other forms of Viṣṇu, though accepted and worshipped by the people, did not acquire a very prominent position. The Nara-Narāyaṇa form seems to have attracted the attention of a group of people in the Gupta period, but did not last long enough to prevail further.

The incarnations of Viṣṇu have a history of their own. Amongst the ten of them, the earlier period witnesses the prominence of Varāha, Nṛsimha and to a small degree Vāmana. In fact, in the initial stages, Varāha and Nṛsimha are the only incarnations that were commonly accepted. It can be said that in and after the Gupta period, Varāha and Nṛsimha exerted as strong an influence as Viṣṇu himself. Their worship persisted upto the mediaeval period, when both of them had formed the separate cults of their own, gaining an independent position.

It is significant that the human incarnations of Viṣṇu, whose worship overshadowed the Varāha and Nṛsimha cults in the later period by forming different cults and sects of their own, have a negligible role to play in the early history of Viṣṇuism.